JOSEPH CONRAD: SITUATING IDENTITY IN A POSTCOLONIAL SPACE

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Joseph Conrad at 54

ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

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This thesis is premised on the notion, drawn mainly from a postcolonial perspective (which is subsumed under the poststructuralist as well as the postmodern), that Conrad's early writing reflects his abiding concern with how people construct their identities *vis-á-vis* the other/Other in contact zones on the periphery of empire far from the reach of social, racial and national identities that sustain them at home.

It sets out to explore the problematic of race, culture, gender and identity in a selection of the writer's early works set mainly, but not exclusively, in the East, using the theoretical perspective of postcoloniality as a point of entry, nuanced by the configurations of spatiality which are factored into discourses about the other/Other. Predicated mainly on the theoretical constructs about culture and identity espoused by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Stuart Hall, this study proposes the idea of an in-between "third space" for the interrogation of identity in Conrad's work. This postcolonial space, the central contribution of this thesis, frees his writings from the stranglehold of the Manichean paradigm in terms of which alterity or otherness is perceived. Based on the hypothesis that identities are never fixed but constantly in a state of performance, this project underwrites postcoloniality as a viable theoretical mode of intervention in Conrad's early works.

The writer's early oeuvre yields richly to the contingency of our times in the early twenty-first century as issues of race, gender and identity remain contested terrain. This study adopts the position that Conrad stood both inside and outside Victorian cultural and ethical space, developing an ambivalent mode of representation which recuperated and simultaneously subverted the entrenched prejudices of his age. Conceived proleptically, the characters of Conrad's early phase, traditionally

dismissed as those of an apprentice writer, pose a constant challenge to how we view alterity in our everyday lives.

KEY CONCEPTS

Joseph Conrad

identity

postcolonial space

third space

colonial discourse

race

culture

gender

OPSOMMING IN AFRIKAANS

JOSEPH CONRAD: POSISIONERING VAN IDENTITEIT IN 'N POSTKOLONIALE RUIMTE

Hierdie tesis is gebaseer op die voorveronderstelde idee, ontleen aan 'n postkoloniale perspektief (wat subsimeer is onder die poststrukturalistiese en die postmoderne perspektief), dat Conrad se vroeë werk sy volgehoue belangstelling reflekteer in hoe mense hulle identiteit konstrueer met betrekking tot die ander/Ander in kontaksones op die periferie van empire ver buite die bereik van sosiale, rasse- en nasionale identiteite wat hulle op die tuisfront onderhou.

Die studie ondersoek die problematiek van ras, kultuur, geslag en identiteit in 'n seleksie van die skrywer se vroeë werk wat afspeel in die Ooste, deur gebruik te maak van die teoretiese perspektief van postkolonialiteit as vertrekpunt, genuanseer deur die konfigurasies van ruimtelikheid wat gefaktoriseer word in diskoerse omtrent die ander/Ander. Hierdie studie, wat hoofsaaklik gegrond is op die teoretiese konstrukte rondom kultuur en identiteit soos voorgestaan deur Homi Bhabha, Edward Said en Stuart Hall, stel die idee van 'n tussenin "derde ruimte" vir interrogasie van identiteit in Conrad se werk voor. Die postkoloniale ruimte, die hoofbydrae van hierdie verhandeling, maak sy werke los uit die wurggreep van die Manicheaanse paradigma in terme waarvan alteriteit of andersheid beskou word. Gebaseer op die hipotese dat identiteite nooit gevestig is nie, maar voortdurend in 'n staat van vervulling verkeer, onderskryf hierdie projek postkolonialiteit as 'n gepaste teoretiese wyse van ingryping in Conrad se vroeë werke.

Die skrywer se vroeë oeuvre lewer 'n geil bydrae tot die onsekerhede van ons tyd in die een en twintigste eeu waar kwessies van ras, geslag en identiteit steeds omstrede terrein bly. Hierdie studie neem die standpunt in dat Conrad binne sowel as buite die Victoriaanse kulturele en etiese ruimte stelling ingeneem het,

wat 'n ambivalente wyse van voorstelling ontwikkel het wat die verskanste vooroordele van sy tydperk aangevuur en ook tegelykertyd omvergewerp het. Prolepties gelees hou die karakters van Conrad se vroeë werk, wat tradisioneel afgemaak is as dié van 'n aspirant skrywer, 'n voortdurende uitdaging in vir ons beskouing van alteriteit in ons alledaagse lewe.

KERNBEGRIPPE

Joseph Conrad

identiteit

postkoloniale ruimte

derde spasie

koloniale redevoering

ras

kulturele

geslag

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I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the role of other academics with whom I interacted, albeit briefly, at some stage. For initiating me to the work of Homi K. Bhabha and the rigours of theory, I am beholden to Professor Rory Ryan of Rand Afrikaans University whom I met in the mid-1990s. On that same occasion, Professor Dirk Klopper, presently at Stellenbosch University, lent me his new copy of Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. I am thankful for such a magnanimous gesture extended to a complete stranger. I also recall with fondness the late Professor Leon Hugo of Unisa, who encouraged me to proceed with doctoral studies.

No project of this nature can be undertaken without the back-up of a good library. In this regard I am thankful to the staff of the Ferdinand Postma Library for their courteous and efficient service, and especially to Ms Gerda van Rooyen for assisting with database searches, and Ms Cora Bezuidenhout of Interlibrary Loans for tracking down rare publications. I am also grateful to Dawie Malan, the English subject librarian of Unisa, for his friendly assistance at all times.

A word of acknowledgement to the distinguished panel of examiners, both local and overseas, would not be out of place. These are critical readers who play a crucial, if sometimes anonymous and thankless, role.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sewlall Gooljar of Durban who, despite their humble station in life, impressed upon me the need to pursue an education in the face of adversity.

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PREFACE

1. Texts Used

Except for *Lord Jim* and *Youth and Two Other Stories* in the Doubleday Edition, published in 1920 and 1927 respectively, the citations from Conrad's works come from the Dent Collected Edition, London 1946-55. The pagination in the Doubleday series corresponds with that in the Dent Edition. The abbreviations of these texts in the thesis are as follows:

AF	*Almayer's Folly*
APR	*A Personal Record*
LJ	*Lord Jim: A Tale*
N	*Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*
OI	*An Outcast of the Islands*
SL	*The Shadow-Line: A Confession*
TLS	*'Twixt Land and Sea: Three Tales* ("Freya of the Seven Isles")
TR	*The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows*
TS	*Typhoon & Other Stories* ("Falk", "Amy Foster")
TU	*Tales of Unrest* ("Karain", "An Outpost of Progress")
Y	*Youth and Two Other Stories* (*Heart of Darkness*)

2. Modification to MLA Style Manual

While this thesis adheres to the MLA Style Manual by Joseph Gibaldi (Second Edition, 1998) in the main, the following modification must be noted:

Where an author has been cited in the thesis, the date of publication of the text has also been given, for example: (Hampson 1998, 3). Where the author's name appears in close proximity to the citation, the name is omitted, for example, (1998, 3).

3. Original Date of Publication

In citations, the original date of publication of a text is indicated in square brackets, for example: (Lefebvre 1991[1974], 23). Under "Works Cited", the original date of publication is indicated in round brackets:( ).

4. other/Other

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998, 170), the word "other" with the lower case "o" refers to the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse. Where the subject desires to exist "in the gaze of the Other", such as in the Freudian and Lacanian notion of the mother or father figure (170), the upper case "O" is used. In this thesis, the term "other/Other" denotes both alterity and the focus of desire .

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

> "Lay him [Dain Maroola] there. He was a Kaffir and the son of a dog, and he was the white man's friend. He drank the white man's strong water [. . .] That I have seen myself." (*AF*, 104)

> The taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical conjuncture, is thus always problematic - the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial "identity" that is played out - like all fantasies of originality and origination - in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions. (Homi K. Bhabha 1994, 77)

> Usually the stereotype is a sad affair, since it is constituted by a necrosis of language, a prosthesis brought in to fill a hole in writing. Yet at the same time it cannot but occasion a huge burst of laughter: it takes itself seriously, believes itself to be closer to the truth because [it is] indifferent to its nature as language. It is at once corny and solemn. (Roland Barthes 1977, 199)

I.

How people perceive themselves and others, especially those who look different from them and do not share the same beliefs and values, has been, and continues to be, the major impetus for the ontology of literary and philosophical discourse. Throughout the ages, different cultures have sought ways to account

for the diversity and the "otherness", or alterity, of others. The problematic of racial otherness and stereotyping is not peculiar to our modern age, but one that goes back to our ancestral times. Even the civilized ancient Greeks and Romans had to contend with their "barbarian" other/Other. Over time, people have come to construct themselves along either religious, racial, geographic, ethnic or national criteria. Medieval Christianity, for example, explained the phenomenon of the black "other" by resorting to the "Biblical association of blackness with the descendants of Ham, Noah's bad son, and with the forces of evil" (Loomba 1998, 105). In his seminal publication, *Orientalism* (1995[1978], 332), Edward Said gives expression to the arbitrary nature of the construction of alterity:

> The construction of identity [. . .] involves establishing opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from "us". Each age and society re-creates its "Others". Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of "other" is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a context involving individuals and institutions in all societies.

With conquests came colonization, and Western and Arab nations increasingly made contact with people of different hues, hair textures, cultures and customs. Such physical and mental contact across cultural spaces was never an auspicious one for the colonized other. Those who did not subscribe to the dominant religious beliefs of the conquering Christians and Arabs were referred to as pagans or heathens by the former, and kafirs (infidels) by the latter (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10th edition). In his polemical tract, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon has memorably characterized the world of the colonial adventurer as a "Manichaeistic world, a world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which

is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world" (1967[1961], 40).

The notion of identity (subjectivity or subject formation) has always been constitutive of the provenance of literary discourse and the *raison d'être* for studying serious literature. Even before the seventeenth century French philosopher Réne Decartes set the benchmark of Enlightenment thinking on the nature of the subject with the famous proposition, "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), literature in the Western world, going back to the time of the Greeks and Romans, was centred on the issue of what it means "to be", and moreover, what it means to be human (albeit in a world of deities who themselves were not exempt from human weaknesses such as vanity, envy and pride!). Jonathan Culler (1997, 110) avers:

> Literature has always been concerned with questions about identity, and literary works sketch answers, implicitly or explicitly, to these questions. Narrative literature especially has followed the fortunes of characters as they define themselves and are defined by various combinations of their past, the choices they make, and the social forces that act upon them.

In the early twenty-first century, the contingency of the issues of race, culture, imperialism and gender continues to give warrant to the study of Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), especially his early writings. When Goonetilleke (1990, 11) poses the question, "In what respects does [Conrad] matter to us?", an appropriate rejoinder might be the words of the eminent Polish scholar and Conradian, Zdzisław Najder: "He saw, a hundred years ago, the shape of things lasting, and of things to come. He identified problems and perils which are still with us today. We need him" (1997, 187). A postcolonial/postmodern reading of Conrad will restore to his early works their prescience to our times. Largely neglected until recently, these early projects, with the exception of *Lord Jim* (1900), have

traditionally been regarded as minor studies in the adventure genre set in the exotic East. Albert J. Guerard's assessment of Conrad's first two novels typifies the early trend of Conradian scholarship: "In *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* we follow the interesting drama of a novelist searching for an elusive and central theme (the character of the vulnerable romantic idealist) and not wholly finding it" (1958, 69). Contrariwise, this study takes the stance that this phase of Conrad's writing affords crucial insights into his lifelong preoccupation with the problematic of identity. Based on the writer's first experiences of different nations and peoples while he was a master mariner, long before he settled into the life of the English gentility, the early works constitute an important chronicle of his excursions into intercultural subjectivity.

Predicated on a selection of early novels as well as short fiction, this research sets out to investigate the problematic of race, culture and identity, using the theoretical perspective of postcolonialism/postmodernism as a point of entry, nuanced by the modalities of space and spatiality. The works of short fiction to be examined are: "Karain" and "An Outpost of Progress" (in *Tales of Unrest*, 1898), and "Falk" and "Amy Foster" (in *Typhoon and Other Stories*, 1903). The novels to be examined are: *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* (1895), *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), *Lord Jim: A Tale* (1900), and *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (an interrupted project, laid aside in 1898, as Conrad tells us in his Author's Note to the novel in the Dent Collected Edition [1949, vii], and completed in 1920). The thesis will argue that the author's early writings, mainly those set in the Malay Archipelago, far from being the inchoate product of an apprentice writer, constitute an important dimension of his enduring concern with the issues of intercultural contact, imperialist discourse and the formation of the self in relation to the other/Other. That such issues have a prescience for us in the twenty-first century is not in doubt, as Fincham and Hooper (1996, xvii) affirm:

Reading Conrad self-reflexively is an antidote not only to the insularity of Eurocentrism, but also to the complacency into which cultural studies can degenerate. Culture cannot be theorized in isolation from politics, and theoretical perspectives explored in the academy can only be valuable to the extent that they influence the way people think and behave.

II.

Any research on Conrad must be indebted to the prodigious scholarship that has accrued since the writer's death in 1924. A survey of such a nature, of necessity, also has to be selective. A convenient point of orientation would be F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1972[1948]) which places the Polish-born Conrad in the august ranks of George Eliot and Henry James, who have since then enjoyed the prestige of belonging to the pantheon of English literature. A formidable reader in the methodology of the New Criticism, Leavis regarded fidelity to artistic form, coupled to a high moral seriousness, as the touchstone of literary merit. Whilst he was generous in his evaluation of Conrad's mature oeuvre, which enjoys canonical status in world literature, he makes short shrift of the early works, dismissing them in fewer than ten lines as "excessively adjectival studies in the Malayan exotic" and not easy "to re-read" (218). There is a studied silence about the relationship of the protagonists across racial and cultural divides.

Race, according to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1986, 5), has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems which, more often than not, also have fundamentally opposed economic interests. The growth of canonical literatures, posits Gates, was coterminous with the prominence of the New Criticism and Practical Criticism of the early twentieth century. Gates problematizes the relationship between race and the aesthetics of New Critical thought as follows:

> How did the pronounced concern for the language of the text, which defined the Practical Criticism and New Criticism movements, affect this category called race in the reading of literature? Race, along with all sorts of other "unseemly" or "untoward" notions about the composition of the literary work of art, was bracketed or suspended. Within these theories of literature to which we are all heir, texts were considered canonical insofar as they elevated the cultural; Eliot's simultaneous ordering of the texts which comprised the Western tradition rendered race implicit [. . .] One not heir to these traditions was, by definition, of another race. (1986, 2-3)

It would have been very interesting to know what Leavis thought about the relationships of people across racial, cultural and national divides in the early writings of Conrad. Whatever he thought or felt about them, the point is that they do not merit consideration against his measure of literariness. Whilst early critics have accorded *Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands* and short fiction such as "Amy Foster" and "An Outpost of Progress" some importance as intertextual signposts to some of the later themes of the writer's mature oeuvre, these texts have generally been read in the mode inaugurated by Leavis.

Guerard, in contrast to Leavis, devotes considerable space to the two early Conrad novels, in keeping with his stated intention which is to express and define his response to a writer he has "long liked and admired" (1958, 1). It soon becomes manifest, however, that the kind of reading we will expect would sanction the methodology of New Criticism in its insistence on form, technique and artistic integrity - perspectives consonant with the grand narratives of Western logocentrism. The term "logocentric" designates the theoretical space of "white mythology" which Robert J. C. Young endorses as a metaphysics which "reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own logos [. . .] for the universal form of that he must still wish to

call Reason" (Young 1990, 7). Finding in *Almayer's Folly*, an "impressive first novel" with no "centre of interest" (1958, 71), Guerard goes on to synopsize the novel as "the unconstructed dreaming of a small real world: a world with its richly evoked daily life and its infinitely complicated politics" (71). Coming closer to the thematics of the novel, Guerard alludes to the "Malayan scene with its intuitions into the savage mind, the struggle of Almayer and his native wife for the mind of their half-caste daughter, of the love affair of Nina and Dain Maroola with Almayer as the jealous rival" (72). Guerard's summing up of the novel is reminiscent of the publisher's description of it at the back of some editions of the Dent Collection: "*Almayer's Folly* is Conrad's first novel, in which amidst exotic Malayan scenes and dramatic happenings the once ambitious but now ineffectual trader moves inexorably to ruin" (*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' and Typhoon & Other Stories*, 1950, 281). Likewise, several other novels set in the exotic East have been précised in this dramatic fashion. Guerard, finding the second novel, *An Outcast of the Islands*, to be more cohesive than its predecessor, even goes so far as to comment on the Willems/Aïssa relationship. Viewing the passion as "corrupt" (80), he concludes: "It is strong enough to conquer racial pride [. . .] But the fascination is presently mingled with disgust, and in the end leads to sexual failure" (80).

The early studies of Conrad's work by influential critics such as Thomas Moser (1957), Albert Guerard (1958), Jocelyn Baines (1959), Frederick R. Karl (1960) and Leo Gurko (1962), may be regarded as scholarship in the Leavisean New Critical tradition which tended to be dismissive of Conrad's apprentice works. Frederick Karl, for example, reminds us that *An Outcast of the Islands* began as a short story, which accounts for its "thinness and deficiency of substance" (1960, 100). Of its protagonist, Willems, Karl says that he is "a study of a man with vain pretensions brought to isolation, sensory exhaustion, and personal impotence, like the pitiful Almayer at the end of Conrad's first novel" (101). Karl identifies the central theme of the novel as the relationship between Willems and Aïssa, but, he

encapsulates it in terms such as Willems's "passion for Aïssa, the native seductress" which leaves him "doomed as a human being, cut off from civilization and civilized feeling" (101). What Karl means by civilization and civilized feeling can only be left to conjecture. Leo Gurko echoes Karl, but proceeds to introduce nature as a trope against which men such as Almayer and Willems are destined to fail: "The corrupt and corrupting jungle becomes the perfect ecological setting for Willems' fall" (1979[1962], 59). Two pages later, he continues in a similar vein: "Nature, however, is seldom so tender. The novel being a study of degradation, and particularly sexual degradation, we see nature chiefly in her fecundity, her teeming regeneration and decomposition" (61).

In the intervals between these early works on the one hand, and Norman Sherry's biographical documentary *Conrad's Eastern World* (1966) on the other, emerged two seminal publications which plotted the future coordinates of Conradian criticism right up to our time. The first of these was Eloise Knapp Hay's *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (1981[1963]), followed by Avrom Fleishman's *Conrad's Politics: Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (1967). Hay confronts the "unequivocal handling of ambiguous material and ideologically debatable questions" (241) in Conrad, but her emphasis falls on the overtly "political" works such as *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent*, the one exception being *The Rescue*. Fleishman's book is more widely encompassing than Hay's, showing the importance of Conrad's lesser-known writings to the political vision of the author. Occasionally, Fleishman lapses into reductivity such as: "In the Asian tales, apart from the sexually attractive natives like Dain Moroola [sic] and Dain Waris [. . .] there are only ungovernable women [. . .] rapacious chiefs [. . .] homicidal maniacs [. . .] and crafty sneaks [. . .]" (95). Apart from a few such contentions one might raise against Hay and Fleishman, there can hardly be a modern reading of Conrad, including this thesis, without the weighty influence of their milestone scholarship.

Two further works which have signalled the direction of this thesis are Daniel

R. Schwarz's *Conrad: Almayer's Folly to Under Western Eyes* (1980) and Benita Parry's *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (1983). In his reading of the early novels, Schwarz combines a biographical perspective with a psychological one. An important insight he provides is that Conrad, in creating Lingard, uses the "biblical concept of symbolic paternity in which God the father or a patriarch confers his blessings almost as if by magic" (5). Thus, both Almayer and Willems depend on Tom Lingard for such a symbolic paternity. However, on the subject of sexuality Schwarz's criticism is compromised by reductive statements such as: "[. . .] Conrad's idealization of heterosexual love is undermined by his obsessive treatment of Victorian sexual taboos: miscegenation, incest, and adultery. That sexuality [. . .] reflects his unconscious discomfort with the subject of sex" (1980, 7-8); or, "The catalytic effect of his passion for Aïssa upon his repressed libidinous needs leads to Willems's atavistic behaviour" (8). What is characteristic of Conradian criticism from the commentary of Leavis, who is largely silent on the early literary output of Conrad, and Guerard up to Schwarz in the 1980s, is how these scholars interpreted the writer from the space of the dominant, patriarchal, Western male critic whose empathy is directed at the white male protagonists who become victims of their corrupting passion in equally appropriate environments where nature and culture are posited as diametrically opposed binaries.

Ian Watt's in-depth critical study, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (1980), published in the same year as Schwarz's book, possesses certain lineaments of early Conradian scholarship. While he devotes an entire chapter to *Almayer's Folly*, focussing mainly on its male protagonist, his treatment of Nina is perfunctory. *An Outcast of the Islands* is dismissed in fewer than two pages even though he regards this as a "more successful novel [and] more consciously literary" (73). The female protagonist of *An Outcast of the Islands* becomes an appendage to Peter Willems: "In this void, Willems succumbs to a beautiful Malay girl, Aïssa [. . .] When Lingard scornfully refuses his appeals for help, Willems's

situation becomes impossible, and Aïssa finally shoots him" (73). This representation of Aïssa in the climactic ending belies the sequence of events in the novel and downplays Willems's culpability in his own death.

Benita Parry's trenchant critique of empire, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers*, based on a selection of mainly canonical texts, marks a significant departure from what she labels "ontological meditations" and "psychological explorations" (1983, 6). This thesis will engage critically with some of her views on *The Rescue*, which have influenced Robert Hampson's own reading of this text. Her work anticipates the direction of Conradian scholarship towards the end of the twentieth century and into the new millennium. Parry's reading against the grain interrogates the predominantly empiricist perspectives which deploy formalist procedures that tend to suppress the politics of gender, race and culture in Conrad.

One of the first rigorously-conceived engagements with Conrad's early women characters was by Ruth Nadelhaft in a compilation edited and introduced by Harold Bloom in 1986. Highly critical of the tendency in previous studies to ignore Conrad's earlier writings, Nadelhaft embarks on a spirited defence of the Malay women in these texts: "Consistently, the men identify themselves [. . .] with Western imperialism (in the guise of 'civilization') and against savagery. And, just as consistently, it remains for the women to offer in their characterization the humanity that goes beyond Western civilization" (1986, 161). Nadelhaft was to pursue her feminist reading with even greater verve in her full-length study, *Joseph Conrad* (1991), which failed to impress at least one male Conradian, John Stape, who dismissed the book as "unconvincing in its revisionist programme" (1996, 252).

In the same year as Benita Parry's project, Edward Said's landmark publication, *The World, The Text and The Critic*, demonstrated new ways of reading Conrad from a social and cultural perspective, based on insights from Freud and Foucault (Said 1983, 90 -110). Since literary scholarship at any

particular time is a conjuncture of ideas past and present, contemporary Conradian scholarship has benefited from poststructuralist and postmodern thought. Works which have profited by insights from recent theory include those such as Bette London's *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Conrad, Forster and Woolf* (1990), Bruce Henricksen's *Nomadic Voices: Conrad and the Subject of Narrative* (1992), Robert Hampson's *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity* (1992), and Christopher Gogwilt's *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (1995). Enriched by perspectives drawn from poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, all four of these studies, in complementing one another, have annexed new territories in Conrad studies.

Bette London's work, energized by "Chinua Achebe's famous 1975 attack" (1990, 39), questions the ontology of truth and experience in literary expression, thus challenging traditional interpretations of *Heart of Darkness*. Her aim is to examine how narrative enacts the construction of cultural identity, especially the identity of the white male-speaking subject. Bruce Henricksen, acknowledging the similarities between his work and London's in his *Introduction*, reads Conrad "from the perspective of [the] recent paradigm shift, from the point of view not only of current narrative theory [. . .] but also of such poststructural and postmodern concerns as the relationship between subjectivity and the constitutive discourses of society [. . .]" (2). London's and Henricksen's eclectic approach has much to recommend it, and it could be profitably transposed to a reading of Conrad's early oeuvre which has not been the focus of their study.

If the Western male critic, with a few notable exceptions such as John H. Hicks and Royal Roussel, referred to by Schwarz (1980, 11), has demurred at giving due weight to the female characters in Conrad's early works, as well as the issues of ethnic and cultural subjectivity, then Robert Hampson's publication, *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity* (1992), premised on the existential psychology of Robert D. Laing, goes some way towards redressing this

imbalance. His chapter on *Almayer's Folly* is titled "Two Prototypes of Betrayal". Using the trope of betrayal, Hampson explores the nuances of this trope as it pertains to Almayer and Nina. Hampson concludes that in accepting Dain Maroola as her husband, Nina "betray[s] part of herself" (1992, 31). The notion of betrayal is problematic in this context. Nina is half-white and half-Malay. Whoever she chooses as a husband, she will always have a split identity. (In fairness to Hampson, it must be stated at this point that he was to modify his opinion on Nina's identity in his later project, *Cross-Cultural Encounters in Joseph Conrad's Malay Fiction* published in 2000, in which he employs the structures of postcolonial theory.) Having given Nina equal attention as Almayer, Hampson proceeds to a consideration of *An Outcast of the Islands*. If one expects to find an equal amount of textual space devoted to Aïssa one would be disappointed. Consonant with the key terms of his book, "betrayal" and "identity", the writer focuses on Willems as the victim of his passion, and the gunshot that kills him (fired by Aïssa), "is only a formality" (1992, 66). Hampson continues, "His ontological insecurity has led him to a system of defences that work to produce the destruction of the self they were supposed to protect" (66). Like Ian Watt, Hampson downplays the role of Willems in the tragic climax and projects him as the victim of Aïssa.

Following in the tradition of London and Henricksen is Christopher Gogwilt's *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (1995). Situating his work in the context of the shift from a "European to a Western identity" (1), Gogwilt admits that he has "not rigorously theorized" (3) his project which explores the relation between Conrad's fiction and the "historicity of the term 'the West'" (3) by linking literary analysis with debates on intellectual history. Whilst marshalling the insights of a spectrum of twentieth-century thinkers ranging from Genette to Derrida and Foucault, he maintains that "their theoretical claims form part of an unresolved dialogue about the place of critical practice in intellectual debates which this study does not pretend to resolve" (4).

Since the 1990s there has been an increasing interest shown in the "postcolonial" tenor of Conrad's work as evinced by the steady stream of conference papers as well as books and journal articles on issues of empire, race and gender. Following Heliéna Krenn's *Conrad's Lingard Trilogy: Empire, Race, and Women in the Malay Novels* (1990) and D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke's *Joseph Conrad: Beyond Culture and Background* (1990), two notable collections of essays in this field have been edited by Robert D. Hamner (*Joseph Conrad: Third World Perspectives*, 1990) and South African academics, Gail Fincham and Myrtle Hooper (*Under Postcolonial Eyes: Joseph Conrad After Empire*, 1996). Hamner's endeavour is of central importance to postcolonial perspectives on Conrad's writings set in Malaysia and Africa. Sub-titled "Third World Perspectives", at a time when the term "postcolonial" as a critical postulate was relatively unknown, the book is a compendium of invigorating essays composed mainly in the 1970s interrogating the author from a postcolonial perspective. Two writers from this volume who will be adduced later in this thesis are Lloyd Fernando, who published his essay on Conrad's "Eastern Expatriates" in 1976 in *PMLA*, and Juliet McLauchlan, whose essay on *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* first appeared in 1979 in *Conradiana*. Pre-dating the bold initiative of Benita Parry, who does not cite Fernando or McLauchlan in her critique of 1983, these scholars mark a significant departure from the critique of Douglas Hewitt, Albert Guerard and Jocelyn Baines, whose views are brought under severe scrutiny. McLauchlan, for example, writes: "More disastrously, the most influential critics, notably Thomas Moser and Albert Guerard, have not only found the love stories unconvincing but [. . .] perfect examples of Conrad's supposed loss of conscious control of his material" (1990[1979], 79). By recuperating some of these pioneering essays, Robert Hamner, as if by default, has made a signal contribution to postcolonial studies in Conrad.

Located within a postcolonial paradigm, Andrea White's *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition* (1993) demonstrates how Conrad "work[s] towards a de-

construction, a dismantling, of the imperial myth as formulated by [. . .] fiction traditionally" (194). Another full-length study of Conrad's Malayan writings has been undertaken by Linda Dryden, titled *Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance* (2000). Dryden posits that Conrad uses the romantic genre of imperial literature to subvert the ideals of imperialist adventurers. As helpful as this study is in viewing Conrad from a different perspective, at times it tends to echo some of the scholars of the 1960s who perceive the male characters as victims of the allure of Eastern women. Dryden also raises a contentious issue when she makes the observation that in *An Outcast of the Islands* there "lingers [. . .] the disturbing suggestion that Conrad actually endorses the notion of racial purity" (82). Concluding this selective purview of critical works on Conrad, two recent compilations deserve mention. In the wake of an international conference on Conrad hosted jointly by South African Universities of Potchefstroom and Cape Town in March-April 1998, two volumes have been published in the series *Conrad: Eastern and Western Perspectives* under the stewardship of General Editor Wiesław Krajka. These are titled *Conrad at the Millennium: Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism* (2001), edited by Gail Fincham and Attie de Lange, and *Conrad in Africa: New Essays on "Heart of Darkness"* (2002), edited by Attie de Lange and Gail Fincham. As the titles of these monographs suggest, the essays in these volumes demonstrate new readings of Conrad from a range of perspectives, from archival scholarship to cultural geography and film studies, subsumed under the broad categories of modernism, postmodernism and postcoloniality.

In the light of the foregoing literature survey which traces Conradian studies from the New Critical reading of Leavis and Guerard to the poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives of London, Henricksen, Gogwilt and Hampson, this thesis extends, explores and revises previous scholarship on the early literary production of the writer from the theoretical space afforded by postcoloniality. In pursuance of this objective, this project sets itself three basic aims: Firstly, it will

consider the potential of postcolonialism as a theoretical construct and a viable mode of critical intervention. Secondly, it will explore a selection of Conrad's early short fiction as well as novels to show how attitudes to race and alterity (other/Other) are integral to the construction of identity and how these are construed proleptically. And finally, it will demonstrate how the modalities of space are imbricated ideologically, socially, sexually, politically, racially and religiously in configuring subjectivity. Having problematized the notion of postcoloniality/postmodernism as a theoretical construct, this thesis will underwrite its viability as a critical apparatus to explore Conrad's early works set in the Orient, thus affirming the relevance of these writings to the fraught question of subjectivity in modern times.

The concept of a "postcolonial space", which derives from Homi Bhabha's postulate of a "postmodern space" (1994, 212), articulates on several nodes. It anchors, firstly, the idea of the temporal and geographical spatiality of Conrad in relation to our time and space, speaking to us from Europe more than a century after the publication of his major writings. Secondly, it charts both the geographic and metaphoric odyssey of the author and his protagonists, who position themselves on the periphery of empire in remote, exotic locales, only to disrupt the gaze of the metropolis by interrogating some of its assumptions about the other/Other. Thirdly, it functions as a "space-clearing gesture", as Appiah has termed it (1997[1991], 63). In other words, it provides a contemporary nexus for an exploration of Conrad in the context of some of the most pertinent concerns of the early twenty-first century, such as race, gender and identity. Finally, as I have inflected the term, a postcolonial space denotes an indeterminate, psychological "third space" in which subjects construct themselves continually, occupying what Homi Bhabha refers to as a "liminal space" which opens up the possibility of a "cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (1994, 4).

This thesis will adopt the position that Conrad stood both inside and outside

Victorian cultural and ethical space, developing an ambivalent mode of representation which simultaneously recuperated and subverted Victorian ideological preoccupations in an attempt to make the reader question his or her assumptions in an effort to "see" (to echo the writer's famous aesthetic manifesto in the *Preface* to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, 1950, x). Locating itself within the perspectival space of postcoloniality/ postmodernism, this study will contend that Conrad's early projects continually dismantle the binary opposites implied in the logocentric Enlightenment worldview which equated the "good" with the West and "evil" with the dark, brooding jungles of the East - images of the Orient commonly adduced in early Conradian scholarship.

This research is premised on the hypothesis that identities are never stable or fixed in templates that can be replicated on demand; that in traversing social, cultural and psychological spaces between "us" and "them", the West and the East, subjects create and recreate themselves continually. The subject of intercultural/interracial contiguity serves to pit race against race, and culture against culture, through a process of doubling and splitting which manifests itself in the aporetic spaces of the early works.

As theories construct themselves eclectically and intertextually, either confirming, qualifying, refuting, interrogating, or modifying previous reading strategies, it would be difficult to confine this research to a single hermeneutic practice. Whilst it would primarily be context-based, relying upon a close engagement with the text, it would be informed by a postcolonial/postmodern perspective. The term "text" must be viewed not simply as a literary artefact but in the wider discursive sense as envisaged by Barthes (1977, 164): "[The] Text is that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder. The theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing".

The notion of a "postcolonial space", the central contribution of this research, has been proposed as a theoretical site from which to interrogate the early

writings of Conrad using the structuring devices of postcoloniality/postmodernism. As a theoretical construct the term "postcolonial" remains an embattled signifier as attested to by Ashcroft et al. (1989), Adam and Tiffin (1991), Williams and Chrisman (1993), Mongia (1997), Moore-Gilbert et al. (1997), Loomba (1998), Chrisman and Parry (2000) and Ashcroft (2001). In his first two editions of *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, published in 1992 and 1994 respectively, Jeremy Hawthorn does not mention the word "postcoloniality", although "poststructuralism" and "postmodernism"' were common currency by then. It is only in the third edition, in 1998, that the term enters the glossary. In the *Introduction*, Hawthorn states, "This third edition contains many new terms, including a fair number associated with the increasingly influential area of postcolonialism" (1998, vii). In the entry itself, which is over a page in length, he refers to postcolonialism as

> [. . .] probably the most fashionable, varied, and rapidly growing of critical or theoretical groupings [. . .] the term can be used in a relatively neutral descriptive sense to refer to literature emanating from or dealing with the peoples and cultures of lands which have emerged from colonial rule [. . .] but it can also be used to imply a body of theory or as an attitude towards that which is studied. (265)

Hawthorn concludes the entry with the observation that the term has created institutional space for the study of a wide variety of "non-Canonical" literatures, and has given academics a focus for the development of "new areas of study" (266). Whilst this thesis, in the main, sanctions his assertion that postcoloniality is an "attitude" to what is studied, as well as an "institutional space", it is in contention with the argument that the term "postcoloniality" is more acceptable because it carries "no fixed ideological baggage as does Orientalism" (266). With the advantage of hindsight, one might revise this opinion today. Postcolonial

discourse is neither neutral nor free of ideology judging from the polemics on the epistemological status of "postcoloniality" by scholars engaged in this field.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) which is considered to be the defining moment in postcolonial discourse, in the opinion of Williams and Chrisman "single-handedly inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse, also referred to as colonial discourse theory or colonial discourse analysis"(1993, 5). As a critique of the West's construction of the Orient, Said's text does not even feature the terms "postcolonial" or "postmodern" in its *Index*. It is only in the *Afterword* to the 1995 printing of the book that Said reflects on the appropriation of *Orientalism* by postcolonial discourse: "Both post-colonialism and post-modernism emerged as related topics of engagement and investigation during the 1980s and, in many instances, seemed to take account of such texts as *Orientalism* as antecedents" (1995[1978], 350). Back then Said envisioned the role of "post-colonial studies [as] a re-reading of the canonical cultural works, not to demote or somehow dish dirt on them, but to re-investigate some of their assumptions, going beyond the stifling hold on them by some version of the master-slave binary dialectic" (352-353).

The earliest sustained use of the term "postcolonial" in a literary-theoretical context was by Ashcroft et al. in their ground-breaking work, *The Empire Writes Back*: *Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989). Proposing that "postcolonialism" should be seen as a "reading strategy" (189) in order to reconstruct "so-called canonical texts through alternative reading practices" (189), the writers conclude:

> Post-colonial criticism appears to be following two major paths at present: on the one hand, via the reading of specific post-colonial texts and the effects of their production in and on specific social and historical contexts, and on the other, via the "revisioning" of received tropes and modes such as allegory, irony, and metaphor and the re-reading of "canonical" texts

in the light of post-colonial discursive practices. (194)

In accord with Ashcroft et al., Stephen Slemon finds the term most useful not when it is used to denote a post-independence historical period but rather "when it locates a specifically anti- or *post*-colonial *discursive* (author's emphases) purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others" (1991, 3).

Jeremy Hawthorn's helpful gloss on the term "postcoloniality" should not obscure the vexed arguments that pre-date his 1998 edition and which continue to rage. Notable among the detractors have been Kwame Anthony Appiah, Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad and even Gayatri Spivak, a translator of Derrida, whose essays have featured in several postcolonial readers. In an oft-quoted essay first published in 1991, Appiah wrote: "Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery" (1997[1991], 62). The belief that "postcolonialism" is a shorthand for Third World criticism and that postcolonial critics are complicit with contemporary capitalism has been advanced by Dirlik in a comment which he himself has characterized as "partially facetious". In his opinion, postcolonialism begins when "Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe" (1994, 328). Ahmad insists that the term "postcoloniality" was never used originally in the context of literature but politics to refer to the postcolonial nation state (1995, 1-20). And finally, Spivak, renowned for her "deconstructive" feminist reading of the canonical text *Jane Eyre*, has accused postcolonial/colonial discourse studies of "becoming a substantial subdisciplinary ghetto" (1999, 1). If anything, these agonistic viewpoints ratify what Moore-Gilbert et al. have to say: "[P]ostcolonialism remains an elusive and contested term. It designates at one and the same time a chronological moment, a political movement, and an intellectual activity, and it is this multiple status that makes

exact definition difficult" (1997, 1). Arif Dirlik, in the essay already referred to, cautions that it would be misleading to classify as "postcolonial critics" intellectuals as politically [and, one might add, methodologically] diverse as Said, Ahmad, Homi Bhabha and Spivak (1994, 335).

Notwithstanding the highly contentious nature of the discourse, it is now generally accepted that the term "postcoloniality" is no longer a signifier of periodicity only but has also come to mean a theoretical perspective from which counter-hegemonic issues such as alterity, race, language, gender, diaspora, homophobia and marginality are discussed. This thesis sanctions the term "postcoloniality" as espoused by Mongia (1997, 5-6):

> Postcolonial theory foregrounds the legacy of the Enlightenment and modernity to underscore the significance that this legacy has had for constructing the conceptual foundations of Western thought. Attempting to dismantle Enlightenment certainties, postcolonial theory acknowledges their continuing and residual power [. . .] Further, the multiplying constituencies of the First World, together with the cross-disciplinary challenges posed by contemporary theory, have created the space for a new opposition. Within this space, postcolonial theory finds a niche in the Western academy.

Homi Bhabha's definition of the term overlaps with Mongia's: "As a mode of analysis, [postcoloniality] attempts to revise those nationalist or natavist pedagogies that set up the relation of the Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition" (1994, 173). This study also affirms the stance taken by Moore-Gilbert et al. (1997, 62) who eschew the temptation to promote another canonical "great tradition" in postcolonial criticism or a kind of multicultural "critical fun-fair, where one can sample the rides as one pleases". They propose, as Bhabha does, an interstitial "third space" between these two approaches in order

to allow commonality and difference to coexist in a manner that challenges many of the assumptions of traditional cultural configurations and their pedagogical politics (62). The dangers of an uncritical postcolonial standpoint have also been pointed out by Attridge and Jolly (1998, 1-13), such as the seduction of Manichean binaries, fetishizing difference, the notion of hybridity [attributed to Bhahba] and multiculturalism.

Postmodernism can best be defined as Western culture's awareness that it is no longer the unquestioned and dominant centre of the world (Young 1990, 19). Fredric Jameson, alluding to the first half of *Lord Jim*, anticipated a postmodern reading of Conrad (1981, 219). Although Jameson's reading of *Lord Jim* is a sustained Marxist exercise, his concession to postmoderism is prompted by the self-conscious, self-generating textuality of the first half of the novel. That there is a positive correlation between the postmodern and the political there is little dispute. Linda Hutcheon (1989, 3) maintains that postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in its representations which are anything but neutral. This view is in opposition to the commonplace assertion that the postmodern, in its reliance on pastiche and playfulness, precludes the more serious subject of politics. Contrariwise, Hans Bertens points out: "It cannot escape anybody's notice, for instance, that important theorists of the postcolonial such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Robert Young are deeply indebted to poststructuralist thought and that there is little, if any, difference between their intellectual and political positions and those of a good many postmodern critics" (1997, 7). If politics (and its coordinates such as race, gender, identity and textual representation) is a concern of postmodernism, then postcoloniality is its terrain. Postcolonial criticism may be viewed as a hybrid phenomenon, considering the major influence exercised by various European theories on the practitioners of this school of thought: Foucault's thesis of power/knowledge on Said; Lacan's psychoanalytic theories on Bhabha; and Derrida and deconstructionism on Spivak. As Elleke Boehmer (1995, 244) has expressed,

> [o]ut of the intersection of postmodern and postcolonial discourses, therefore, emerged a postcolonial criticism which champions in particular those aspects of the postcolonial narrative which particularly appeal to the theory: its interest in the provisional and fragmentary aspects of signification; its concern with the constructed nature of identity [. . .] In short, postcolonial and postmodern critical approaches cross in their concern with marginality, ambiguity, disintegrating binaries, and all things parodied, piebald, dual, mimicked, borrowed and second-hand.

Within the theoretical paradigm of postcoloniality/postmodernism, this research seeks to explore Conrad's representation of racial, cultural, gender and national identity, not simply in binaristic terms of black *vis-à-vis* white, but also white *vis-à-vis* white; not in terms of critical closure, but in terms of contingency and aporia. An important critical dimension this thesis will endorse is Stuart Hall's finely calibrated notion of identity formation. According to Hall (1990, 224-226), there are at least two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first position defines identity in terms of one shared culture which reflects common historical experiences and shared cultural codes. Such a representation of identity, for example, might be a Caribbean or black diasporic one. This conception of cultural identity played a crucial role in post-colonial struggles for independence. Although Hall does not mention the word "nationalism", this model would accord with a nationalistic conception of cultural identity, or Benedict Anderson's imagined community: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, of even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, 15). The second view of cultural identity, sanctioned by this thesis, recognizes that despite the many points of similarity in a shared culture, there are crucial ruptures and discontinuities which constitute the uniqueness of any cultural

identity. In this second sense, identity, far from being a fixed category, is a matter of becoming as well as of being; it belongs to the future as much as to the past. As Stuart Hall's theory is germane to this study, it would be apposite to quote him at length:

> [Cultural identity] is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 1990, 225)

Hall's proposition flows from his earlier argument that, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, we should think of identity as a "production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within representation. Hall also asserts that we speak and write from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. If, as Hall posits, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narratives of the past, then as a corollary it would be apposite in our century to view Conrad's colonialist writings as they speak to us, not only from the past, but how they speak to us in the space of the present, in which identities are continually produced and performed by literary artefacts.

Finally, an aspect imparting coherence to this research will be that of intertextuality, a theory first postulated by Bakhtin and subsequently developed by poststructuralist thinkers Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. In order to

discourage the banal reading of intertextuality as a study of the sources of texts, Kristeva preferred the term "transposition". She proposes that any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is an absorption of and a reply to another text (1980, 36). Conrad's Malayan works, which constitute a vast fictional panorama in which characters and motifs are replicated, are amenable to an intertextual exploration.

III.

This study comprises six chapters. The purpose of this introductory chapter (Chapter One) has been to delineate the problem statement, literature survey, aims, thesis statement and method. It has also theorized the notion of a "postcolonial space" -the central contribution of this research - and the viability of a postmodern/postcolonial reading of Joseph Conrad in the early twenty-first century. In Chapter Two, titled "Configuring Identities: Savages, Simpletons and Others", the focus is on Conrad's portraiture of a vast gallery of characters placed on the margins of empire where they interact with the other/Other. A selection of his early short fiction, namely "Karain", "An Outpost of Progress", "Falk" and "Amy Foster", forms the backdrop to the rest of this project which explores the nature of alterity and subject formation. Chapter Three, titled "Race and Miscegenation in *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River*", focuses on the writer's first novel which offers a rich matrix to explore the problematic of race, gender and cultural identity. The trope of miscegenation serves to pit one sex against the other, as well as one race against the other. Through a process of doubling and splitting characters like Almayer and Dain, Mrs. Almayer and Nina, represent figures interacting with one another in a colonizer/colonized paradigm. Nina's rejection of her father's culture emblematizes the anti-imperial gesture characteristic of Conrad's Malayan novels.

The subject of Chapter Four is Conrad's second published novel, *An Outcast*

of the Islands, which extends intertextually the spatiality of racial, cultural and gender dynamics initiated by *Almayer's Folly*. Titled "Transgressing Boundaries", this chapter examines the relationship between Aïssa and Willems, who are the *alter egos* of Nina and Almayer respectively. In this novel Conrad unambiguously deconstructs the imperial stereotype of the dominant male *vis-à-vis* the submissive, native love-interest. In both the early novels, the colonized (native women) return the gaze of the colonizers (European males) in disturbing ways.

Chapter Five considers *Lord Jim* and the chronologically problematic *The Rescue*. These two novels complete the cycle of intertextuality which integrates the Malayan novels, also known as "The Lingard Trilogy". The thematic rubric of this chapter, "The Boy's Club", replicates the motif "one of us" which becomes a refrain in *Lord Jim*. This motif transfers, in a nuanced way, to *The Rescue* which examines Lingard's role as a lover, a friend and a gentleman. Both novels complement each other in problematizing the idea of what it means, firstly, "to be", and secondly, to be a "gentleman" in an alien society. Woven into the texture of the novels, are stereotypes of Malays and Europeans which are subjected to scrutiny and deconstruction. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the project with a summary of the main argument and a reflection on the postcolonial/postmodern space in Joseph Conrad in the context of the early twenty-first century.

If Western discourses of race and alterity have engendered the subjectivities of men like Almayer, Lingard (of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*), Willems and Mr. Travers, then these in turn have produced the counter-discourse of half-caste women such as Nina, Mrs. Almayer and Jewel, and Malays such as Aïssa and Babalatchi. If Conrad has been accused of not giving a voice to the other/Other in *Heart of Darkness*, *à la* Chinua Achebe, then he cannot be accused of shirking this authorial responsibility in his early works. Tzvetan Todorov, in his incisive critique of Henry Louis Gates's special edition of *Critical Inquiry* which deals with the issues of "race", "writing" and "difference", has reserved his praise for only a few contributors who "explore not the victimizers' but the victims'

perception of 'race' and racism" (1986, 378). This research endorses the conviction that Conrad, unlike his contemporaries, has not only empathized with the condition of the other/Other, but also accorded him or her both authority and agency.

Chinua Achebe's counter-reading of *Heart of Darkness* has energized much postcolonial criticism both for and against Conrad. His relentless indictment of Conrad's portrayal of Africans has not only projected Conrad into the popular imagination as a "bloody racist", but also creates the antithetical space from which he is interrogated by feminist/postcolonial critics such as Padmini Mongia (2001) and Marianna Torgovnick who claims that she is always "repelled" when she reads *Heart of Darkness* (1990, 145). Ngugi wa Thiong'o, for whom Conrad was an early literary model, said in an interview: "With Conrad, I'm impressed by the way he questions things, re-questions things like action, the morality of action, for instance" (Duerden and Pieterse 1972, 124). Later, Ngugi was to change his allegiance from Conrad to the Caribbean writer, George Lamming. His reason was that Conrad "wrote from the centre of the empire [whereas] Lamming wrote from the centre of those struggling against the empire" (Ngugi 1993, 6). This thesis constitutes not only a rejoinder to the criticism of Achebe and Ngugi, but is also a challenge to those critics who persist in dismissing Conrad as a Eurocentric, canonical writer - a view typified by the following comment:

> [G]lobal expansions of the imperialist venture have met with euphoric celebrations and justifications in literary works of such widely read writers as Jane Austen, Dickens, Kipling, and Conrad. The most dismaying irony is that all these writers have been and are still enthusiastically studied as canonical figures in the disciplines of philosophy, history, and literature in non-Western as well as Western countries. (Xie 1997, 15)

David Spurr (1999[1993], 193) posits that in order to confront the problem of

Western writing about the non-Western world a solution would be in the substitution of one discourse for another. Drawing upon the methodology of Derrida and Kristeva, Spurr suggests the "possibility of a writing that would open itself to the realities of the other" (196). Like Derrida and Kristeva who live both in and beyond the West, Joseph Conrad situates himself on the outer limits of Western European culture and writes back to it, both representing the other/Other in terms congenial to the West but at the same time deconstructing these stereotypical representations in a disconcerting, if not equivocal manner. Whilst postcoloniality and the language of postmodern theory create the geographical space for others such as Salman Rushdie, Jean Rhys and Gabriel Garçia Marquez to write back to the empire, in Conrad's early texts the theoretical space for interrogation of subjectivity is "always already there" - to appropriate a phrase from poststructuralist discourse. That these works, whether set in the Far East, or Africa, or the South Seas, should offer the space for an interaction of various identities is a reflection of half-a-lifetime's experience of alterity Conrad brings to his writings. Peter Firchow (2000, 7) makes this point tellingly in his monograph on *Heart of Darkness*:

> Given the many years - half a lifetime, practically - that Conrad had spent wandering the world in ships or being stranded for weeks in remote places in the Pacific, often sharing close quarters with people from a wide variety of national and ethnic backgrounds, it is not surprising that he should seek to reflect this multinational, multiethnic experience in his work.

* * *

CHAPTER TWO

CONFIGURING IDENTITIES: SAVAGES, SIMPLETONS AND OTHERS

> The brig's business was on uncivilized coasts, with obscure rajahs dwelling in nearly unknown bays; with native settlements up mysterious rivers opening their sombre, forest-lined estuaries among a welter of pale green reefs and dazzling sandbanks, in lonely straits of calm blue water all aglitter with sunshine. ("Freya of the Seven Isles", *'Twixt Land and Sea: Three Tales*, 170-171.)

> As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and those other histories against which [. . .] the dominating discourse acts. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another [. . .] In the same way, I believe, we can read and interpret English novels [. . .] whose engagement [. . .] with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance, and finally native nationalism. (Edward Said 1994 [1993], 59-60)

> Falk had to eat the uneatable, and in so doing he discovers the radical relativity of cultural categories; the narrator has to speak the unspeakable, and in so doing he encounters the insoluble problematics of utterance. (Tony Tanner 1976, 36)

I.

Although the focus of this chapter will be Conrad's early short fiction, namely "Karain" (1897), "An Outpost of Progress" (1897), "Falk" (1901), and "Amy Foster"

(1901), the first epigraph to this chapter, taken from a story published in 1912 which marked the middle phase of the writer's career, is redolent of the stories of his early period when his propensity for exploring a vast cross-section of humanity becomes evident. It reflects the backdrop against which his portraits emerge - a backdrop which is a composite of the hostile, the mysterious and the unknown in a universe subtended only by the sky, the sea and the sun. Conrad's fictional world is not homogenous, but an area of overlapping cultures - Islamic, Christian, Arabic, English, Dutch, Chinese and Malay. It is from this vast expanse that Conrad draws his protagonists who represent humanity in its multitudinous variety. How some of these protagonists construct their own identities and how they see themselves in relation to the other will be the subject of this chapter.

Conrad's early short fiction provides a fertile ground for establishing identities that take root in the imagination of a writer thrust into a world of alterities far away from the metropolitan comfort zones of society, be it the Malay Archipelago, Africa, the South Seas or an isolated coastal community in England. It is in this alien world bereft of the assurances of familiarity and comradeship that we encounter characters such as Karain, Kayerts, Carlier, Makola, Captain Falk and Yanko Goorall. All these subjects are positioned ambiguously, sometimes representing "one of us", a refrain which runs through several works but mainly *Lord Jim*, and sometimes the "other", or "Other", which in Lacanian terminology implies the ambivalence of fear of, and desire for, the Other, an aspect that will be examined in the context of "Karain" and "Amy Foster".

Anyone intent on cataloguing imagery and diction that might reflect the author's obsession with otherness would find ample verification in the shorter fiction. In other words, it would be a relatively simple matter to find evidence of Conrad's "racism" as alleged by Chinua Achebe in his famous, if not notorious utterances, first in a 1975 lecture, when he referred to Conrad as a "thoroughgoing racist" (Achebe 1988[1977], 257) and in 1977 when he revised his opinion to "bloody racist" (Achebe 1990[1978], 124). A plausible argument could be advanced that

the writer was no different from his fellow European compatriots in Poland, France and England, who fell under the sway of popularist Darwinism. In this context Allan Hunter (1983, 62) has declared that it was extremely convenient for colonists not to have to regard other races as being of the same species, and thus to allow them only certain inferior status and employment. Indeed, a random survey of some of Conrad's short fiction would make for a convincing case in Achebe's favour as the following few examples might suggest: Gobila, a chief in "An Outpost of Progress" is a "gray-headed savage, thin and black" (*TU*, 95); Makola from the same story is a "nigger" (*TU*, 86) and a "beast" (*TU*, 106); and old Nelson, who is "one of us" in the story "Freya of the Seven Isles", would not hurt the "feelings even of a mop-headed cannibal" (*TLS*, 154).

Viewed from the theoretical space afforded by postcoloniality, these constructions of the other in Conrad's early fiction are not as clear-cut and unproblematized as the excerpts quoted selectively might suggest. If not ironic in his treatment of alterity, the writer is most certainly ambiguous and even subversive in his handling of subjectivity. If anything, Conrad is setting up his late Victorian reader only to deconstruct the latter's hypostatized notions about black *vis-à-vis* white, them and us, savage and civilized, pagans and believers. It cannot be otherwise, as this thesis broadly postulates. It would be perverse of the writer if he simply juxtaposed whiteness and blackness, or civilization and savagery, as he so boldly does, in order to gratify the habits of mind of his Victorian contemporaries. In fewer than twenty lines from the beginning of the "An Outpost of Progress", for example, we are told that the "taciturn and impenetrable" Makola "despised the two white men" (*TU*, 86). In turning the gaze of a putatively minor character towards his imperial masters, Conrad's narrative touches on the major problematic of agency and authority in postcolonial criticism. By whose agency can Makola be represented as "taciturn and impenetrable"? Is the narrator the ultimate authority to represent whiteness or blackness? Are there possibilities of misrepresentation or distortion in the way alterities are constructed

by the authorial voice (authority)? These are some of the central questions that underpin this chapter and the rest of this study.

II.

The eponymously titled "Karain" functions both as a matrix for an exploration of cultural and racial subjectivity, and as a prelude to the rest of this study by problematizing the notions of racial and cultural identities which are imbricated in it. The genesis of the story may be traced to a letter Conrad wrote to Edward Garnett, dated 07 February 1897: "I am thinking of a short story. Something like the [sic] Lagoon but with less description. A Malay thing. It will be easy and may bring a few pence" (Karl and Davies 1983, 338). By 13 February he had completed about thirty pages, and, as he confided to Garnett on that same day, he was "heartily ashamed of them" (339). Predictably, with its lush exotic evocations of the Malayan jungle in the manner of "The Lagoon", it received dismissive treatment from serious scholars such as Guerard (1958), Baines (1959) and Karl (1960) who pronounced that such "descriptive virtuosity [was] wasted on a story that is self-limiting" (119). Eloise Knapp Hay (1981[1963], 73), contextualizing the story within the theme of commitment and betrayal, dispenses with it in just two words: "[. . .] slight 'Karain' ". Although Fleishman (1967) and Palmer (1968) devote several paragraphs to the story, with Fleishman observing that Conrad has introduced a derisive note on the materialism of the Europeans (120), it is not until Daniel Schwarz's rigorous study of the story that we come closer to the heart of the matter. What Schwarz says about the companion piece "The Lagoon" is also a pertinent commentary on "Karain": "The thrust of the tale is to demonstrate that the basic ingredients of human life are the same; that the natives are not inferior beings; and that despite differences in customs and the level of civilization, mankind shares basic goals and dreams" (1980, 28).

In common with all the stories discussed in this chapter, "Karain", despite its

adjectival insistence and its surfeit of lush visual evocation, is an anatomy of alterity and a deconstruction of the bases on which subjectivities are constructed. A clue to its layered complexity as a dialectic on the discourse of otherness is provided by a narratorial intrusion towards the end of the story when the three Englishmen see Karain going off in a canoe after they have given him a Jubilee sixpence as an amulet to protect him from the ghost of Pata Matara, the friend he betrayed and killed. Immensely pleased with themselves at having duped the superstitious native, they give him three cheers in the best British tradition, to the puzzlement of the Malays in the boat. Upon reflection on the entire incident, the narrator ponders: "I wondered what they thought; what he thought; . . . what the reader thinks?" (*TU*, 52). This self-conscious intrusion - a postmodernist touch - broaches the issue of alterity in terms of how the rest of the Malays perceived this episode of the amulet, how Karain felt about it, and how the readers back in England construed it. The pregnant pause introduced by the ellipsis, followed by the inflection of the verb "thought" to "think", interpellates the contemporary reader to position himself or herself not only *vis-à-vis* the episode of the Jubilee sixpence which celebrates Queen Victoria's reign, but the entire story which, in the final analysis, is a dissection of human relationships across racial and cultural divides within the context of colonialism. Robert Hampson (2000, 127) suggests that by implicating the reader in the narrative, Conrad problematizes the boundary between reader and text in the same way as the narrative has problematized boundaries between cultures. By drawing parallels between different cultures in their attitude towards the wearing of amulets and charms, Conrad does not promote the conception of a hierarchy of values between cultures but emphasizes the commonality between them. It is not only natives and "savages" who attach importance to charms but Europeans as well, as will be noted presently in this section on "Karain" and in the discussion on *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue* in Chapter Five.

Unlike earlier scholars of Conrad, whose reading strategies foreclosed on the

exploration of colonial discourse and issues of race, racism and the clash of cultures, recent scholars have taken up the imperative to "think" about this story. Prominent amongst recent expositions have been the works of Ted Billy (1997), Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan (1999), Linda Dryden (2000) and David Adams (2001), all of whom have engaged exhaustively with the story from different perspectives. Whilst none of these scholars has consciously placed his or her reading within the paradigm of a postcolonial critique, the issues they highlight are consonant with the concerns of postcolonial interrogation.

The situating of identities in "Karain" is enabled through one of the most ornate tropes in Conrad, namely, that of a stage and performance, with its implied themes of illusion and reality. It is a trope that is sustained from the beginning of the tale till the end. What we are presented with on stage early in the story is an elaborately-constructed presence of the ruler of three villages, Karain:

> Meantime he filled the stage with barbarous dignity [. . .] He gave them wisdom, advice, reward, punishment, life or death, with the same serenity of attitude and voice. He understood irrigation and the art of war - the qualities of weapons and the craft of boat-building. He could conceal his heart; had more endurance; he could swim longer, and steer a canoe better than any of his people; he could shoot straighter, and negotiate more tortuously than any man of his race I knew. He was an adventurer of the sea, an outcast, a ruler - and my very good friend. (*TU*, 8)

Linda Dryden (2000, 119) rightly argues that Conrad taps into his readers' preconceptions about the East in order to create a "magazine'ish" quality. Conrad himself made the comparison with a magazine in a letter to Cunninghame Graham (Baines 1959, 189). However, without wishing to detract from Dryden's critical insights elsewhere, her assertion at this point that the writer uses the romantic genre merely to attract an audience with no intention to subvert it is questionable

in the light of the theatrical presentation of Karain as well as the tenor of her essay which tackles the issues of femininity, empire and racial subjugation. The antithetical terms of the description of Karain, his destructive qualities such as his dispensing of the death penalty and his warlike predisposition, juxtaposed with his creative abilities, argue a position that deconstructs the colonial stereotype of the noble savage. By whose authority and agency can Karian be described as "barbarous"? His expertise in dealing in matters of life and death in relation to his subjects may seem "barbarous" from the perspective of the Western narrator, but as a leader he has to protect his people from other ethnic groups who are a source of constant threat, as well as dispense justice in consonance with his society's Islamic precepts. In any event, if amputation and decapitation as modes of punishment are construed as barbarity, then they seem merciful compared to the kind of punishment once practised in the Western world as described graphically by Foucault in the opening pages of his treatise, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991[1977], 3-5). The irony in the use of the word "barbarous" is enriched when one considers that the person who employs it is a gun-runner and a purveyor of arms to the natives.

The term "barbarous" is an echo of an earlier image. In the second paragraph of Part 1 we are introduced to the otherness of the Orient in a profusion of contradictory yet colourful and sumptuous images such as "faces dark, truculent, and smiling; the frank audacious faces of men barefooted" (*TU*, 3); "their ornamented and barbarous crowd" (*TU*, 4); the "variegated colours of checkered sarongs, red turbans, white jackets, embroideries; with the gleam of scabbards, gold rings, charms [. . .] and jewelled handles of their weapons" (*TU*, 4). John McClure (1985, 154) postulates that artists tend to write both within the conventional discourses of their times, and against them. In making his case for both Kipling and Conrad, he avers that their portraits of other peoples are inconclusive, drawn now in the conventional terminology of racist discourses, now in terms that challenge these discourses and the image of the other they

prescribe. McClure also asserts that "a strong consensus in the west [sic] held all peoples of other races to be morally, intellectually and socially inferior to white Europeans, and saw their ostensible inferiority as a justification for domination" (154). The picture of the Malays presented by the narrator is a complex one. They are warlike yet friendly; barefooted yet dignified; and if superstitious because they wear charms, they are civilized enough to produce gold and jewellery which are symbols of wealth, power and civilization in the West. But the Malays are not the only ones who believe in charms. When Hollis, the youngest of the three gun-runners, rummages in his box for the Jubilee sixpence, the narrator comments sardonically on seeing some of the objects in it such as a white glove, flowers, buttons and letters - all mementoes of a girl back home: "Amulets of white men! Charms and talismans! Charms that keep them straight, that drive men crooked, that have the power to make a young man sigh, an old man smile" (*TU*, 48). Around the figure of Hollis, with all these "gifts of heaven - things of earth", the narrator conjures up for a brief moment the lost world of mystery and romance which have been driven out by "the unbelieving West by men who pretend to be wise and alone and at peace - all the homeless ghosts of an unbelieving world" (*TU*, 48). David Adams has stated that the story "not only exploits but also undermines the opposition between Western enlightenment and Eastern superstition by treating the English narrator's rationalism ironically" (2001, 725).

Such scathing irony, an outcome of Conrad's constant juxtaposition of colonial racial discourse with a contrapuntal reading of it, is often obscured by his narrators' overt racist comments. That Conrad's narrators sponsor racial and racist stereotypes occasionally is a given in his writing. At the beginning of Part 3, the narrator speaks of Karain's preparation for war with a steadfastness of which he thought him "racially incapable" (*TU*, 18). Further down the page, he speaks of Karain's primitive ideas, his "childish shrewdness" and his "concentrated lust of violence which is dangerous in a native". Such racist stereotyping was the stock-in-trade of nineteenth-century colonial discourse. Edward Said (1995[1978],

207) proposes that the Oriental was viewed "in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment", having an identity best described as lamentably alien. Whilst Said views racial stereotyping in binary terms such as "us" and "them", the West and the Orient, Homi Bhabha's re-reading of Said introduces the constructs of fetishism and ambivalence into the discourse. Drawing upon the psychoanalytical work of Freud and Lacan, Bhabha proposes that the fetish or stereotype leads to an identity which is predicated on mastery and pleasure, as well as on anxiety and defence, for it is a contradictory belief in its recognition of differences and a disavowal of it (1994, 75). Karain's difference represents a fetish or a stereotype that is alien to the Western mind but at the same time it represents, in Lacanian terms, the lack, or the Other, which is both feared and desired. Ted Billy's comment is pertinent in this regard: "Moreover, Conrad turns the myth of the noble savage inside out by endowing Karain with anxieties endemic to the Western sensibility [.]" (1997, 129). If Conrad seems to sponsor racial and cultural differences at times, then the ambivalence that Homi Bhabha speaks of becomes operative when the author/narrator begins to subvert such stereotypes:

> There are those who say that a native will not speak to a white man. Error. No man will speak to his master; but to a wanderer and a friend, to him who does not come to teach or to rule, to him who asks for nothing and accepts all things, words are spoken by the camp-fires, in the shared solitude of the sea, in riverside villages, in resting-places surrounded by forests - words are spoken that take no account of race or colour. (*TU*, 26)

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, in a comprehensive chapter of her text *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad: Writing, Culture and Subjectivity*, presents the thesis that "Karian" is an assassination of its predecessor, "The Lagoon" (1999, 61-62). Her point is that whilst "Karain" might seem like a clone of its predecessor

because of the similarities in style and setting, it is not a replication because in moving from "The Lagoon" to *Heart of Darkness*, "Karain" can be read as a turning point, a deconstruction of the logic of sameness and identity on which its ostensible prototype is premised (1999, 61-62). Towards the end of the story when Karain returns to the "glorious splendour of his stage" (*TU*, 52), one hand on the hilt of his kris in a martial *pose* [my emphasis], he sweeps a "serene look over his conquered foothold on the earth" (*TU*, 52). As he makes his exit from the world of the narrator, Jackson and Hollis and returns to his people, this dramatic gesture reinforces the trope of performance and suggests Karain's return to the next stage of his life where he would have to adopt a different identity and defend his people from other intruders, other conquerors. When the narrator meets Jackson seven years later in front of the shop of an arms dealer, the latest firearms on display remind Jackson of Karain and the current unrest in the East. From Jackson's comment, "He will make it hot for the caballeros" (*TU*, 54), we surmise that Karain is now engaged in battles with the Spaniards. This takes us to the beginning of the story where the narrator speaks of the various native uprisings in the Eastern Archipelago (*TU*, 3) which are being reported in the newspapers. Through the interstices of the opening paragraphs, the memory of Karain asserts itself, conjuring up a world of "sunshine and the glitter of the sea" (*TU*, 3). This luminous image of the East is in sharp contrast to the drab surroundings in which the narrator and Jackson meet at the end of the tale. Here, in England, it is "A watery gleam of sunshine" (*TU*, 54) that flashes on the "broken confusion of roofs, the chimney-stacks, the gold letters sprawling over the fronts of houses" (*TU*, 54). The ersatz gold lettering reminds the reader of the authentic gold rings and jewellery worn by the natives in Karain's world and this constitutes an ironic riposte to Jackson's question put to the narrator as to whether Karain's world was true; whether the story of Pata Matara's ghost haunting Karain was true.

The stage as a metaphor for the enactment of life's illusions has served

Shakespeare well in several plays. Indeed, in the story "Karain" Conrad has presented us with a veritable stage which is traversed by actors who make their entrances and exits, with Karian as the central character around whom others construct their identities. When the narrator poses the self-conscious question about what the reader "thinks", he provides an important clue to the way we see others and ourselves. In his influential work *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Charles Taylor (1989, 34) writes that we are not selves in the way that we are organisms like our hearts and livers, but that we are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions, as we seek and find an orientation to the good. Identities, as this thesis hypothesizes, are never fixed in binary oppositions of us/them, black/white, and East/West, but are always in a state of flux. If Conrad gave the story "Karain" a glossy magazine look to cater for the exotic taste of his Victorian readers as Linda Dryden has submitted, then for us in the twenty-first century the story's appeal lies in its construction of alterity. As such, the story reinforces the themes of alterity and cultural differences in this chapter as a whole and functions as a sounding board for the rest of this study.

III.

If the Far East provides a setting for the spotlight on the dynamics of intercultural contact in "Karain", then in "An Outpost of Progress" Africa becomes the scenario for a drama which enacts the tension between Kayerts and Carlier, a pair of white men who are representatives of empire, and the tension between them and the native blacks. Peter Firchow (2000, 103) iterates that it was Conrad's only other African story, and as most other scholars have noted, a companion piece to *Heart of Darkness*. Brian Shaffer has gone so far as to dub the story, which was originally titled "A Victim of Progress", as the "Ur-text" of *Heart of Darkness* (1993, 46). Although some earlier scholars such as Albert Guerard, John Palmer and Frederick Karl have been lukewarm in their reception

of the text, dismissing it in passing, it has generally been well received and periodically re-appraised. There is consensus amongst critics that the story is a scathing satire of empire. Whilst Firchow insists that the object of Conrad's censure is specifically the Belgian empire (2000, 103), Schwarz has commented that because Conrad does not give them any nationality nor unique personality, he wants us to see the two white men as representative figures of European civilization (1980, 26). Ian Watt's estimate of the story is reflective of most traditional interpretations of it:"[. . .] Conrad's basic theme [is] the practical incapacity, and the intrinsic moral and intellectual nullity, of the typical products of modern urban society" (1980, 75).

That the tale is an excoriating satire on the questionable nature of empire in general, is in accord with what Conrad himself has said about the story which he describes in the Author's Note to *Tales of Unrest* (1947, vii) as "the lightest part of the loot [he] carried off from Central Africa, the main portion being of course 'The [sic] Heart of Darkness'". In a letter to T. Fisher Unwin, dated 22 July 1896, he wrote: "It is a story of the Congo. There is no love interest in it and no women - only incidentally. The exact locality is not mentioned. All the bitterness of those days, all my puzzled wonder as to the meaning of all I saw - all my indignation at masquerading philanthropy - have been with me again, while I wrote" (Karl and Davies 1983, 294). Erdinast-Vulcan endorses Conrad's authorial intent when she comments that the writer's sense of moral outrage which energizes his corrosive irony is evidence of his ethically active subjectivity (1999, 114).

Recent postcolonial perspectives on the story have focussed on Conrad's interest in the portrayal of alterity. One such endeavour has been by Claude Maisonnat (1996, 101-114) who sets out to achieve two things in his essay. Firstly, he makes a case that Carlier and Kayerts are modelled on the paradigm of classical tragedy, and secondly, that the concept of alterity operates in a variety of nuances. The conclusion he draws is that by representing the protagonists and their inability to come to terms with Otherness in others and in themselves,

Conrad comes to terms with their Otherness and with his own (114). This attempt to finesse the notion of alterity seems somewhat strained to me, as does the writer's attempt to accord tragic status to the two simpletons. By no stretch of the imagination can they be elevated to the level of classical Greek tragic figures. A more vigorous engagement with alterity in my estimate is a study by Robert Hamner who maintains, "Decades before the term [otherness] was even postulated, in attempting to interrogate Western hegemony at the extreme limits of its confrontation with distant, alien cultures, Conrad is coming to grips with nothing less than the daunting enigma of 'otherness'" (2001, 175). A similar line of reasoning is developed by Robert Hampson in his essay "'An Outpost of Progress': The Case of Henry Price". Foregrounding the native Makola in his title, Hampson professes:

> The story could be analysed further solely in terms of the two Europeans. However, this would be to continue a tradition of misreading: "An Outpost of Progress" (unlike "Heart of Darkness") is very carefully grounded in the cultural diversity of Africa, and Makola/Henry Price is the pivotal figure in the narrative: his ability to negotiate between and manipulate the different cultures of Europe and Africa is the centre of the story. (2002, 218)

Conrad's preoccupation with the question of identity and otherness is registered in the very first sentence of the story: "There were two white men in charge of the trading station" (*TU*, 86). The sentence is startling in its simplicity and boldness of expression. The third sentence juxtaposes the whiteness of the two men with the blackness of the "Sierra Leone nigger, who maintained that his name was Henry Price" (*TU*, 86). The "nigger" is Makola who works as the clerk of Carlier and Kayerts. It is ironic that Chinua Achebe should accuse Conrad of denying the African a voice in *Heart of Darkness* whereas in its companion piece, "An Outpost of Progress", the African is presented as one who is not only given

a voice but who demands an identity, and that of a white man to boot! He insists on this name even though the rest of the natives address him as Makola. Conrad is at pains to construct a meticulous portrait of Makola and his family in the first, rather lengthy paragraph of the story. We are told that he speaks English and French with a "warbling accent"; that his wife is a negress from Loanda; that he has three children; that he worships evil spirits; and finally, that he "pretended" to keep a correct account of things at the outpost. In sum, the composite picture that emerges of Makola and his lifestyle is in keeping with his invented "white" identity of "Henry Price", especially the surname "Price" which evokes ironic undertones of commercialism and exploitation and is an important clue to Conrad's shrewd intention of turning the late-Victorian reader's notion of the subjectivity of black people on its head.

From the portrayal of Makola, in contrast to that of Carlier and Kayerts, it is evident that Conrad is engaging in the delectable exercise of deconstructing stereotypes. This becomes apparent if we examine the nineteenth-century discourse on race and racism. Based on the racial typology of Count Gobineau, the mid-nineteenth century racial theorist, the distinguishing characteristics of the black races were: feeble intellect, very strong animal propensities and partially latent moral manifestations. The opposite qualities characterized white races. They were perceived to have vigorous intellects, strong animal propensities and highly cultivated moral manifestations (Young 1995, 104). David Goldberg (2000, 160) contends that anthropologists in the nineteenth century theorized primitive societies in binary differentiation from a civilized order. Primitive societies were seen as

> nomadic rather than settled; sexually promiscuous, polygamous, and communal in family and property relations rather than monogamous, nuclear and committed to private property; illogical in mentality and practicing [sic] magic rather than rational and scientific. In popular terms,

> nonwhite primitives have come to be conceived as childlike, intuitive, and spontaneous; they require the iron fist of "European" governance and paternalistic guidance to control inherent physical violence and sexual drives.

Most scholars have commented on the ending of the story where the Managing Director of the Company finds the body of Kayerts hanging from the cross, with his tongue sticking out. They have been consensual in their interpretation of Kayert's unintended gesture as an act of deflating the ambitions of empire. It is Robert Hamner who comes closer to the mark: "Kayerts's posthumous irreverence toward the Managing Director is simultaneously Conrad's thumbing of the nose at nineteenth-century hubris" (2001, 185). This is precisely what Conrad is doing in his presentation of the subjectivities of Makola and the white colonials. Makola defies almost every facet of the stereotype of the primitive in nineteenth-century discourses on race. He is monogamous and adopts the Western ideal of a small family unit; he has a house of his own; he is mentally agile and multilingual and also "quietly diligent" (*TU*, 87). That he believes in evil spirits establishes the fact that he even has a theosophy of his own unlike Carlier and Kayerts whose belief in nothing points to the nullity of their existence. Makola's house is built neatly of reeds (*TU*, 86), whereas the plank floor of the building occupied by the putative representatives of progress is "littered with the belongings of the white men [which] accumulate mysteriously round untidy men" (*TU*, 87). And the final and most subtle touch is that he "pretends" to keep accurate accounts. The image of accounting, which brings to mind the ironic resonances in the symbolic figure of the Accountant who plays with dominoes at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, is a potent device to satirize the grandiose schemes of empire with its fetish for keeping accurate accounts of its imperial gains. As we read further we discover that Makola has no scruples about selling his own people into slavery. To be sure, he represents the figure of the colonizer *par excellence,* who outwits his two

bosses at their own game. On the subject of racial prejudice Oliver C. Cox (2000, 74) asserts, "It should be made clear that we do not mean to say that the white race is the only one *capable* [author's emphasis] of race prejudice. It is probable that without capitalism, a cultural chance occurrence among whites, the world might never have experienced race prejudice". Whilst Gobila, the gray-headed savage "seem[s] really to love all white men" (*TU*, 95), the capitalist Makola "despis[es] the two white men" (*TU*, 86). If this is racism in reverse, it has as its source not skin pigmentation but financial interests which sometime override ideologies of race as will be observed in the novels *Almayer's Folly: A Story of an Eastern River* and *An Outcast of the Islands*. Makola is the monopolist (to borrow the appellation to Captain Falk) whose interests conflict with those of the Company, hence his inordinate dislike of Carlier and Kayerts.

To invoke Robert Hamner once again, he sees in Makola the type of character V. S. Naipaul anatomizes in *The Mimic Men* (1967). Lacking a substantial identity of his own, the mimic man assumes the trappings of some other, usually dominant, culture (2001, 179). Homi Bhabha, who discusses the notion of mimicry at length, defines colonial mimicry as the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite (1994, 86). It is a complex strategy which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power. The desire for power, "through the repetition of *partial presence* (Bhabha's emphasis), which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. It is a desire that reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness [. . .]"(1994, 88-89). Peter Childs and Patrick Williams (1997, 129-130), unravelling Homi Bhabha's argument, explain that mimicry, as another mode of colonial discourse, is ambivalent because it recognizes a similarity and a dissimilarity. It relies on resemblance, on the colonized becoming like the colonizer but always remaining different. But mimicry also produces a disturbing effect of colonial rule

in the form of menace but this is a menace produced by (or forced upon) the colonized.

Makola is the archetype of the mimic man whose partial presence in the persona of Henry Price (he even refers to his wife as "Mrs. Price"!), returns the gaze of empire, thus constituting a menace to its colonial ambitions to the extent that the outpost of progress "quickly becomes an outpost of savagery" (Schwarz 1980, 27). Because Makola is more competent at the business of empire building than they are, Kayerts and Carlier regard him in terms such as "beast" and "filthy scoundrel", always adding to it "an opprobrious epithet" (*TU,* 106). Reminiscent of Kurtz, Carlier even talked about the necessity of exterminating all the niggers before the country could be made habitable (*TU*, 108). This outburst is provoked when Gobila's people declare a national holiday after appropriating the carcase of a hippo which Carlier had shot in the river but lacked the intelligence to retrieve. The fetish of skin colour in colonial discourse, claims Homi Bhabha (1994, 78), is the most visible of fetishes which is the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype which facilitates colonial relations and sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised. On the side of Kayerts and Carlier, the fetish of colour prejudice empowers their discourse; on Makola's part it is his economic guile which gives him a sense of superiority and fuels his racial prejudice. He is the direct cause of the predicament of Carlier and Kayerts. The night he trades off the Company's workers for ivory, he destabilizes the community when one of Gobila's men is shot dead. In retaliation, Gobila cuts off essential supplies to the post thus reducing Carlier and Kayerts to near starvation which precipitates their fatal quarrel over a few lumps of sugar. In the end it is Makola who wins the psychological battle for survival.

Jeremy Hawthorn (1990, 165), drawing a comparison between Kurtz and Carlier, both of whom are inspired to exterminate rather than civilize, argues that their ideals are unable to survive the first-hand experience of imperialism, even

though these same ideals have encouraged and justified imperialism from afar. This brings to mind the paradigm of panoptic control famously espoused by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991[1977]), mainly in the chapters titled "The Carceral" and "Panopticism". Whilst physically free, Kayerts and Carlier are still in bondage to their imperial masters who control them in a panoptic fashion:

> They were two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals, whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds [. . .] The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions and principles [belong] not to the individual but to the crowd: the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion. (*TU*, 89)

Devoid of any individuality or originality of thought, Kayerts and Carlier are manipulated like puppets by an imperial power that exercises surveillance from afar. Empire has set up the panoptic structure, making accessible to these two imbeciles the most powerful propaganda at its disposal - the written word - through which it exercises control. Lacking any critical powers, they become willing victims of the propaganda machine of empire. They find copies of a home paper which extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth (*TU*, 94). In a fine exemplification of Foucault's panoptic paradigm, these two representatives of civilization eventually begin to exercise surveillance over themselves, without the all-seeing eye of empire to police them: "Carlier and Kayerts read, wondered, and began to think better of themselves" (*TU*, 95). Imperial propaganda has achieved its ultimate objective of colonizing the minds of these two pathetically inadequate creatures by bridging the panoptic or architectural space between colonizer and colonized by means of the written word. This accords with what Bhabha has

written about the nature of colonial control: "Only the seat of government is always elsewhere - alien and separate by that distance upon which surveillance depends for its strategies of objectification, normalization and discipline" (1994, 83). Kayerts and Carlier are representatives of a colonial power that remains aloof from its subjects whom it alienates through a lack of understanding and an inability to comprehend their culture. In comparing Conrad's approach to Africa in "An Outpost of Progress" and his approach to Malaysia, Robert Hampson concludes that the writer emphasizes cultural diversity and exposes different kinds of European ignorance (2002, 225). In contrast to Kayerts and Carlier, it is Henry Price with his "fluid performance of identity" (Hampson 2002, 227) who emerges as the stronger character.

IV.

The story of Captain Falk in "Falk", sub-titled "A Reminiscence", provides a unique opportunity in Conrad for the exploration of the shaping nature of discourse on the prejudices and preconceptions of society. The focus of this section will not be the moral aberration of Falk as the Hermann family and the narrator who represent society perceive it but rather the vexed postcolonial discourse surrounding the subject of cannibalism and how this relates to and impacts on the "othering", or ostracizing, of Falk by society.

"Falk", which Richard Ambrosini describes as Conrad's first story of passion between a white man and a white woman (1991, 201), has traditionally been viewed as the story of a monopolist whose intense desire for the passive but comely niece of Hermann, parallels his strong instinctual desire for food and survival, which precipitates his recourse to cannibalism on a ship adrift in becalmed waters. John Lutz, who views the story in terms of patriarchy, hunger and fetishism, conjoins the idea of hunger with the politics of economy: "Although Falk himself appears to deviate from normative behaviour in the consumption of

human flesh, on a metaphorical level, his behaviour remains entirely consistent with the competitive logic of monopoly capitalism" (2000, 178). Albert Guerard who has described this story as one of the author's "lesser short novels" (1958, 62), focuses on the hesitant if not equivocal attitude of the narrator towards Falk's major crime of the sea - cannibalism on a drifting ship. Tony Tanner, who has also used the tropes of eating and consuming as a point of departure, moves beyond this paradigm to comment astutely on the role of discourse in shaping perceptions: "In these and many other ways, all the main characters are involved in different kinds of hunger, different kinds of devouring and assimilating, different kinds of telling and listening" (1976, 22).

The subject of cannibalism is, to say the least, disconcerting to the modern reader, arousing feelings of deep revulsion and even horror at the desperation of those who resort to this ultimate mode of survival. In his Author's Note to *Typhoon and Other Stories* in the Dent Collected Edition (1950, vii), Conrad tells us that the story offended the delicacy of one critic at least by "certain peculiarities of its subject". Conrad declares, not very convincingly to my mind, that the "unusual experience" (viii) is not the subject of the tale, but rather the fact of Falk's attempt to get married "in which the narrator of the tale finds himself unexpectedly involved both on its ruthless and its delicate side" (viii). Despite this disavowal, the "unusual experience" of cannibalism becomes the cataclysmic moment in the story and the point of departure in the moral subjectivity of Captain Falk.

Despite the ambivalent attitude of the writer and the narrator towards the character of Falk, with the latter even showing some understanding of Falk's social aberration, typical responses to the story until the last decade or so have ranged from perfunctory dismissals to serious engagements with the tension in the story emanating from the protagonist's crime. Jocelyn Baines (1959, 261-265) typifies the latter kind of critic whose perceptive comment has direct relevance to a reading of the story in our century. In response to Douglas Hewitt's claim that the story undermines the values of the narrator, Baines remarks: "The story does

not undermine values in which Conrad believed; it shows only that there are situations in which certain values may not apply" (264-265). Leo Gurko's assessment is typical of most approaches to the story. He writes pithily: "[Conrad] deals with the florid conception of a man who has eaten his way out of the human race through cannibalism and wishes to win his way back to it through love" (1979[1962], 210). An important observation by Gurko, which will be examined later, is that Falk is inarticulate like the girl he desires and neither speaks the other's language. Albert Guerard, who tends to valorize Conrad's mature work to the exclusion of the early ones, can only see the writer "groping toward his central subject and conflict" in a story that is "diffuse and otherwise uninteresting" (1958, 20). Norman Page (1986, 152) is redolent of previous scholars who have replicated images of Falk as an elemental, semi-human being, in short, a centaur. His contribution is to shift the perspective of "Falk" so that it is not a story of survival or cannibalism, but of innocence and experience, "especially an innocence so armour-plated that the truth cannot penetrate it" (152). The image of armour-plated innocence aptly describes Hermann and his wife, but especially the former, whose genteel bourgeois world is shattered by the reality of Falk's experience which transgresses one of the strongest taboos of society, namely, cannibalism.

On the subject of stereotyping, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism, Homi Bhabha posits that the concept of fixity is central to the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity as a sign of cultural, historical or racial representation is a paradoxical mode of representation which connotes "disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (1994, 66). Likewise the stereotype - which Bhabha regards as a major discursive strategy - depends for its efficacy on the repetition of an idea for its perpetuation, so that, "the *same* [author's emphasis] old stories of the Negro's animality, the Coolie's inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish *must* [author's emphasis] be told (compulsively) again and afresh, and are differently gratifying and terrifying each time" (1994, 77). If skin colour, or hair

texture, or culture are set up as the usual signifiers of alterity, then with Captain Falk, the "dark navigator" (*TS*, 239), it is his act of eating human flesh to survive *in extremis* that imparts to him the image of otherness with its connotations of savagery and degeneracy.

The trope of cannibalism has received due attention in postcolonial literary space as it is commonly imbricated in the language of colonial discourse to designate the strangeness and consequent threat posed by the colonized others. Peter Hulme (1986, 17), theorizes that the first time the word "cannibal" appeared in a European text was in Columbus's journal written in 1492 which has disappeared since then and what we have are reported versions. When Columbus approached an island, some Indians belonging to the Arawak tribe who were with him are reported to have told him that the island was inhabited by people with one eye in the forehead, and others whom they called "canibals". Of the latter they were terrified because these people ate them. If this is a "beginning text", as Hulme calls it (170), then its authenticity should be in doubt. It cannot be taken as an accurate eye-witness ethnographic report, considering Columbus had no prior knowledge of the language. At best it should be regarded as the first fable of European beginnings in America. According to Hulme, the word cannibalism "was adopted into the bosom of the European family of languages with a speed and readiness which suggests that there had always been an empty place kept warm for it" (17).

The first canonized novel in the English language to symbolize Europe's expansionism was Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). A product of the outward reach of the Enlightenment, it may be regarded as the Ur-text in postcolonial discourse, having promulgated the "trineries" of us, them and cannibals. Ania Loomba contends that language and literature are together implicated in constructing the binary of a European self and a non-European other in an attempt to establish colonial authority. Thus the term "cannibalism", Loomba declares, is not just a synonym of the older term "anthropophagy" denoting the

practice of humans eating their own kind, but "indicated the threat that these savages could turn against and devour Europeans" (1998, 73). In postcolonial criticism the term "cannibalism" is loaded with discursive significance, acting as a signifier of a taboo which ostracizes one group of persons from another, or a single person such as Captain Falk from the rest of bourgeois society, represented by the Hermann family in the story.

It would be instructive to examine closely the reaction of the company on the vessel the "Diana" (almost every commentator on this story has noted the irony of this classical name within the context of Falk's pursuit or "hunting" of Hermann's niece). As soon as Falk has uttered the climactic words "Imagine to yourselves [. . .] that I have eaten man" (*TS*, 218), the narrator ejaculates "Ah!", whilst Hermann, "dazed by the excessive shock" murmurs "Himmel", soon after which he "rumple[s] his hair and shriek[s] just one word, "Beast". It is interesting to observe that the girl remains mute in this electrifying scene as she does in the rest of the story. Her only reaction later, apart from her incessant sewing, is to weep silently after Hermann has "harangued the two women extraordinarily" (*TS*, 220). Hermann's rage is quite predictable. It is the stock response of someone whose sense of propriety has imploded. He accuses Falk of violating the sanctuary of his cabin where his wife and children live (*TS*, 218-219). Several times the narrator catches the words "Mensch" and "Fressen" uttered by Hermann, only to discover later after consulting his dictionary that the latter word means "Devour". When the narrator attempts to introduce some logic into this insane story by considering the "circumstances", Hermann will have none of it. "According to his ideas no circumstances could excuse a crime - and certainly not such a crime. This was the opinion generally received" (*TS*, 221). Hermann, secure in his bourgeois value-system, is quite content with received opinion. He also has his own unswerving sense of logic: "The duty of a human being was to starve. Falk therefore was a beast, an animal; base, low, vile, despicable, shameless, and deceitful" (*TS*, 221). Such is Hermann's simple syllogistic reasoning which defies

any kind of further or deeper interrogation.

A useful theoretical principle to understand where the writer, narrator and reader position themselves in this scene has been adduced by Jeremy Hawthorn in quite a different context of Conrad's work. Referring to the use of Free Indirect Discourse (FID),Hawthorn maintains that this device enables us to recognize not only what the writer is interested in revealing, but also from what standpoint he or she wishes the reader to experience this revelation (1990, 1). The use of FID by Conrad in this climactic moment in "Falk" acts as a distancing device to separate Hermann's views from the author's as well as the narrator's. The shock of Falk's confession triggers off a train of FID in which Hermann conjures up images mostly associated with "devour[ing] human flesh", "unclean creature", "eater of men", and finally, reaching a climax with the image of "a common cannibal". This is the first time since Falk's disclosure that the word cannibal has been used. But before this word is uttered, a passing remark reveals the hollowness of Hermann's sense of morality. "Why tell? [. . .] Who was asking him?" (*TS*, 222). In common with the rest of humanity, it would seem that Hermann cannot bear too much reality. The ironic point about Hermann's reaction can be captured in the common parlance: what the eye does not see cannot hurt. It is a measure of Hermann's own hypocrisy that he passes judgement on Falk but he is not prepared to understand him. When Hermann's discourse switches to direct speech, he ends with the words "Horrible! Horrible!", to which the narrator makes the neat, sardonic rejoinder, "You are too squeamish, Hermann" (*TS*, 222). The narrator sums up Falk's actions as most critics have since done: "He wanted to live [. . .] There is in such a simple development a gigantic force, and like the pathos of a child's naive and uncontrolled desire [. . .] He was a child. He was as frank as a child, too. He was hungry for the girl, terribly hungry, as he had been terribly hungry for food" (*TS*, 223-224). The insistent image of a "child" juxtaposed with phrases such as "uncontrolled desire" and "hunger for food" echoes one of the most vibrant chords of postcolonial critique. Along with other terms such "noble

savage", "savage beauty" and "elemental being", the image of a child juxtaposed with diction evocative of uncontrolled desire constitutes an important dimension in the rhetoric of colonial discourse in the construction of the Other. Although the idiom of colonial discourse is usually employed to designate the non-Western world, it also provides a discursive space for the exercise and expression of power over the Other. Jo-Ann Wallace (1994, 173) affirms that in the Enlightenment discourse on childhood, the child represented potential as well as a subjectivity and corporeality in need of discipline.

In his study *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1999[1993]), David Spurr undertakes to identify certain common tropes that are used in Western discourses about non-Western peoples. These myths, symbols, metaphors and rhetorical procedures in Spurr's opinion, constitute a kind of repertoire for colonial discourse available for purposes of representation (3). In similar fashion, it may be argued that Falk and his future wife are constructed as the Other through a constellation of images which emphasizes either their less attractive dimension, or their primitive sensuality. We are told early in the story that "Falk was a Dane or perhaps a Norwegian [. . .] At all events he was a Scandinavian of some sort, and a bloated monopolist to boot" (*TS*, 161). The narrator has no qualms about blurring Falk's national identity at the expense of foregrounding his negative trait. That the narrative voice in Conrad's work in general can be notoriously unreliable is borne out in texts such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Under Western Eyes*. While the narrator often represents the conventionalized, stereotypical view held and valorized by society, the authorial position is more problematic. It is this feature of Conrad's writing that appeals to a critic such as Abdul JanMohamed who places Conrad's colonialist work in the "symbolic" realm (as opposed to the "imaginary" one), which enables the writer to break out of the "manichean allegory" (1985, 66) of good versus evil and the binaries of "us" and "them". This reflexive temperament is antithetical to the "imaginary" colonialist literature which fetishizes a fixed opposition between the self and the native. Representing the normative

view of society, the narrator describes Falk and the girl in images which highlight their animal sensuality, thus excluding them from the mainstream of civilized conduct:

> They were a complete couple. In her gray frock, palpitating with life, generous of form, olympian and simple, she was indeed the siren to fascinate that dark navigator, this ruthless lover of the five senses. From afar I seemed to feel the masculine strength with which he grasped those hands she had extended to him with a womanly swiftness. (*TS*, 239)

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, citing Beneviste, insists that it is through language that man constitutes himself as a subject (1999, 104). Having made this point, she avows that Falk's lack of language is a defect in his character: "The monopolist, the ultimate survivor, is totally inarticulate, conducting both his courtship and his business deals in silence, communicating with others by sighs, grunts, and nods" (107). In making this observation about Falk, Erdinast-Vulcan echoes Leo Gurko (1979[1962], 210) who commented that Falk and the girl are inarticulate. However, instead of viewing this lack of language as a defect in Falk's character, it is my conviction that the grammar of barbarism and cannibalism embedded in the colonialist discourse of people like Hermann, combined with the overwhelming evidence of Falk's parsimony and rumours of a previous courtship, all conspire to render him inarticulate, with the status of the outcast or the Other. Just as Friday in J. M. Coetzee's deconstructive novel *Foe* is rendered inarticulate by the lack of a tongue, Falk is portrayed as being linguistically handicapped. It is only through the narrator's gauche interrogation that the "unusual experience" to which Falk was "sensitive enough to be affected permanently by" (in the Author's Note referred to previously) that his past is "re-memoryed", a key concept used by Toni Morrison in *Beloved* (1988, 36) to re-construct the history of a community of slaves. It is worth taking a closer look at

this process of unravelling Falk's past.

The question which initiates the interrogation by the narrator is, "'Where was it that this shipwreck of yours took place?'" which is followed by "'And what was the name of the ship?'" (*TS*, 225). Falk's reply is: "'*Borgmester Dahl*,'" [. . .] followed by "'It was no shipwreck.'" Surprised at this reply, the narrator adds, "'Not a shipwreck? What was it?'" (*TS*, 226). The unexpected answer is "' Break down'". The narrator then reports, "I had till then supposed they had been starving in boats or on a raft - or perhaps on a barren rock" (226). The word "supposed" is the clue that unpacks the entire discourse that has shrouded the incident of Falk's cannibalism. As this dialogue is crucial to the point being made, it is necessary to quote the response of the narrator at length:

> Remembering the things one reads of it was difficult to realize the true meaning of his answers. I ought to have seen at once - but I did not; so difficult is it for our minds, remembering so much, instructed so much, informed of so much, to get in touch with the real actuality at our elbow. And with my head full of preconceived notions as to how a case of 'Cannibalism and suffering at sea' should be managed I said - "You were then so lucky in the drawing of lots?". (*TS*, 226)

Once again the narrator is to be sharply corrected by Falk whose rejoinder is, "'What lots? Do you think I would have allowed my life to go for the drawing of lots?'" (*TS*, 226). What the above exchange serves to underscore is that Falk's subjectivity has not only been based largely on hearsay and assumptions, but that these assumptions are the result of the ways in which society is conditioned by grand narratives about self and other, savage and civilized. That the narrator had assumed that Falk had been shipwrecked or marooned, and that they had drawn lots on the ship, is reflective of the overdetermined narratives that accompany the subject of cannibalism, which is superbly emblematized in the narrator's phrase

in the foregoing quotation, "Cannibalism and suffering at sea".

Going back to Falk's confession on the *Diana*, the alacrity with which Hermann seizes upon the idea of eating humans endorses Hulme's comment about the warm place reserved for the word "cannibalism". The disgust it evokes is a stock response which overshadows its denotative meaning, which is a practice that is associated more often with primitive rituals and pathological conditions rather than habitual widespread culinary habits. One might say that the confession was a catastrophe waiting to happen, because it must be remembered that Hermann had every reason to think the worst of Falk, the man who damaged his boat in an act of outrage. Leela Gandhi, adducing Foucault, proclaims that the rhetoric of otherness extends to cover criminality, madness, disease, foreigners, homosexuals, strangers, and women (1998, 40). In a society where a person like Hermann, despite his hypocrisy, is seen as the norm, Falk must of necessity be viewed as antithetical to it. He is the "other" whose identity has to go through the eye of the needle of Hermann and the narrator before it can be constructed. He speaks a foreign language, behaves strangely for a white man by not eating meat (It is Schomberg who utters, "'A white man should eat like a white man [. . .] Ought to eat meat, must eat meat'" [*TS*, 174]), conducts his courtship in an unconventional way, and above all, becomes a criminal by breaking the ultimate societal taboo on the eating of human flesh. In Hermann's estimate he must be mad "for no sane person [. . .] would own to having devoured human flesh" (*TS*, 222). The ironic twist here is that Hermann does not seem to view Falk's cannibalism as morally deviant, but rather the act of owning up to it. It is a telling commentary on his sense of morality and double-standards.

The story "Falk" is sub-titled "A Reminiscence". By its very nature a reminiscence is not an authentic source of knowledge. It is a narrative that is coloured by the teller's subjectivity as much as it is at the mercy of the teller's memory. As a mode of representation it is fraught with blind spots, silences and authorial selectivity. The character of Falk has been further constructed by the

literary discourse that has surrounded it from the time his cannibalism was first mentioned by a critic. Falk's cannibalism has been regarded as a given, around which all critical opinion has revolved from various perspectives. What Conradian scholarship seems to have ignored is the role of the discourse on cannibalism in which this story is embedded. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, in their reference work *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998), maintain that the emergence of the word "cannibal", in place of "anthropophagy", was an especially powerful and distinctive feature of the rhetoric of empire. In replacing a descriptive term, it became an ontological category (31). A postcolonial reading enables a deconstruction of this discourse so that Falk's identity is liberated from the fixed narratives of the past.

If a reminiscence is an act of remembering, then, as Homi Bhabha reminds us in his *Foreword* to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, remembering "is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (1986, xxiii). This is akin to Toni Morrison's formulation of "re-memorying" in her novel *Beloved* (1988, 36) in which the traumatic past of the slaves is remembered by the force of will. Remembering Falk's past requires an active interrogation of the attitudes of those like Schomberg and Hermann who have ostracized him on the basis of hearsay and rumour. Such an interrogation entails an examination of language and its relation to reality, a theme that finds expression in Conrad's later works. It requires a deconstruction of the discourse that has shaped Falk's subjectivity in order that we see Falk not simply as a "centaur" but someone who painfully "re-members" his dismembered [no pun intended] past and regrets it.

V.

Whilst "Falk" is an analysis of alterity and alienation embedded in the contentious discourse on the subject of cannibalism, "Amy Foster" is an exposition

of society's bigotry founded on national and ethnic differences. Norman Page (1986, 148) states that "Amy Foster" was written "quite quickly in May-June 1901", immediately after "Falk". The contiguity of these two works perhaps accounts for some of the similarities between them. In "Falk" we come across two people who are physically attracted to each other. The relationship between Amy Foster and Yanko Goorall is also largely based on the physical attraction that Amy feels for Yanko, although the latter's devotion to her springs from a deeper spiritual source after she offers him succour in the form of half a loaf of white bread, such bread as "the rich ate" (*TS*, 134) in his country:

> Suddenly he dropped the bread, seized her wrist, and imprinted a kiss on her hand. She was not frightened. Through his forlorn condition she had observed that he was good looking [. . .] Through this act of impulsive pity he was brought back again within the pale of human relations with his new surroundings. He never forgot it - never. (*TS*, 124-125)

There is, however, between these two stories a greater and more profound resonance. If the critique of silencing and "othering" can rescue the story of Falk from being just another yarn about cannibalism, then an unpacking of this discourse is pertinent to a reading of "Amy Foster". If both Falk and Hermann's niece are characterized by their mutual silence in a homogeneous society, Yanko and Amy are silenced in different ways to accentuate their otherness in a society that has to cope with the ethnic difference of a man who marries a woman who is "one of us", yet ironically not "one of us" on account of her choice of a spouse as well as her low status in society. Coupled with this fact, she is not physically or intellectually endowed. This opinion is expressed at two significant moments. The first mention of it is made early in the story when the frame narrator sees her for the first time: "I had the time to see her dull face, red, not with a mantling blush, but as if her flat cheeks had been vigorously slapped" (*TS*, 107). Kennedy, the

doctor who relates the tale to the frame narrator, adds his own brush strokes to her portrait: "She is very passive. It's enough to look at the red hands hanging at the ends of those short arms, at those slow, prominent brown eyes, to know the inertness of her mind [. . .]" (*TS*, 107).

The other occasion when her lack of physical beauty is remarked upon is in the context of Yanko's seemingly inexplicable attraction to her. This time, the tone of Kennedy's comment is not only unflattering to both Yanko and Amy, but patronising and racist: "I wonder whether he saw how plain she was. Perhaps among types so different from what he had ever seen, he had not the power to judge; or perhaps he was seduced by the divine quality of her pity" (*TS*, 135). That Kennedy is not an innocent, objective reporter has been observed by Myrtle Hooper in a feminist reading of this story. She submits, "The inarticulate suffering of women is by no means an uncommon trope in Conrad: in this instance, the collusion of masculine critic with masculine narrator serves to mask the crucial irony in the tale" (1996, 64). This irony, she proceeds to point out, is that the real "other" in Kennedy's story is not Yanko, but Amy, whose opposition of silence to this narrative makes her so. I do not endorse this viewpoint totally because I regard Yanko's predicament as the nexus in the postcolonial debate about the marginalized other, as well as the Lacanian figure of desire as represented in the Other. Yanko, who is regarded as some kind of savage beast , also possesses certain natural abilities that are desirable to the others, as will be illustrated shortly.

Chinua Achebe's animus against the creator of *Heart of Darkness* did not simply end with the charge of racism but extended to anti-Semitism and xenophobia as well (Achebe 1990[1978], 126-127). Regarding the latter, he has said, "But even those not blinkered, like Conrad, with xenophobia, can be astonishingly blind" (127). These charges are made briefly in passing and are not substantiated by Achebe. One assumes that the charge of xenophobia is subsumed under the broader charge of racism in the essay as a whole. As for

anti-Semitism, if the passing reference to Jews as conniving with human traffickers responsible for the plight of people such Yanko Goorall (*TS*, 116) smacks of anti-Semitism, then Conrad is being no more anti-Jewish than he is anti-German or anti-Scandinavian or anti-Chinese when he wishes to stress the unsavoury aspects of such people in various contexts throughout his fiction. Whilst Conrad is guilty of stereotyping when he wishes to distance himself from the "otherness" of their conduct, nationalist or ethnic characteristics in his fiction are often markers of identity such as "His father [. . .] cleared [a] plot of fair pasture land on the sunny slope of a pine-clad pass to a Jew inn-keeper" (*TS*, 117). The fact that the Jew is depicted as materially better off in the land from where Yanko comes, is being no more anti-Semitic than, for instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o is anti-Indian in his novel *A Grain of Wheat* where he describes Indian shopkeepers in Kenya living in filthy conditions and exploiting Africans (1967, 170). However, to return to Achebe's charge of xenophobia, it is richly ironic that the Conrad who is accused of being "blinkered" by his xenophobia should write "Amy Foster" which is a searing indictment of the xenophobia of the small English town of Colebrook, which contributes directly to the tragedy of Yanko Goorall's marriage to Amy Foster.

The term "xenophobia" features strongly in the current politics of diaspora and identity, which belongs to the provenance of postcolonial discourse. Since early scholarship there have been two predominant strands in the discussion of "Amy Foster", namely, the extreme loneliness of Yanko Goorall the poor immigrant from Central Europe bound for America and washed ashore here in a storm (*TS*, 111), and the lack of communication which is exacerbated by the loneliness. Albert Guerard sees the failure of communication as "the subject and central preoccupation of Conrad's greatest books" (1958, 48). In common with most critics before and after him, Guerard makes the inevitable link between the fate of Yanko and Conrad, seeing in the former a projection of Conrad's loneliness. Despite the considerable space Guerard accords this early work of the writer,

unusual in his criticism, he ends his commentary expressing his disappointment as the story does not match the claustrophobic imaginings of Kafka or the subtlety of Camus's understatement (51). In some respects Guerard's own assessment of this multi-layered and ironic exploration of xenophobia is a bland understatement, unlike the bluff but short response of Leo Gurko who comes closer to the crux of the matter: "After marriage, after motherhood, Amy relapses into the provincial stupidity from which he had briefly roused her" (1979[1962], 211).

The resonances between "Amy Foster" and the writer's own life have been the staple of most commentaries. Ted Billy (1997, 225-226), focussing on the conclusion of the story, draws attention to the fact that Yanko dies with the English word "merciful" on his lips. Extrapolating from this, Billy observes, "In this narrative one can detect Conrad's own ambivalence about his departure from Poland as a youth and his establishment in England as a novelist writing in a language other than his native tongue". H. G. Wells' account is illuminating for its reflection on how Joseph Conrad was perceived by a fellow English writer who was not always sympathetic towards his work:

> At first he impressed me, as he impressed Henry James, as the strangest of creatures [. . .] He had a dark retreating face with a very carefully trimmed and pointed beard, a trouble-wrinkled forehead and very troubled dark eyes, and the gestures of his hands and arms were from the shoulders and very Oriental indeed [. . .] He spoke English strangely [. . .] Conrad with Mrs. Conrad and his small blond-haired bright-eyed boy, would come over to Sandgate [. . .] driving a little black pony [. . .] with loud cries and endearments in Polish, to the dismay of all beholders. (cited in Baines 1959, 233)

It is not coincidental therefore that when Yanko Goorall appears on the shores of

England, Mr. Smith, the employer of Amy, who first sees this strange creature, should remark to the narrator, "Now tell me, doctor - you've been all over the world - don't you think that's a bit of a Hindoo we've got hold of here?" (*TS*, 126). With his dark complexion and his un-English physiognomy, he might appear to be an Indian from the northern climes of India. It is also telling, if not ironic, that a villager in England should jump to such an erroneous conclusion since India was not only a jewel amongst the Crown's possessions but also the alien Orient and as such misunderstood and highly likely to be essentialized and stereotyped. Edward Said makes a similar point in his essay, "Orientalism Reconsidered": "The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other" (1986, 215). The tendency to label, or rather mis-label the other, is fraught with inaccuracies which can be offensive to the other party. In the case of India, a vast sub-continent of a myriad ethnic groups and languages, the conflation of a religion, Hinduism, with an inhabitant who could be Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Christian, is problematic. With Yanko, a darker-skinned Caucasian from the Eastern Carpathians, the nonsensical label "Hindoo" attains its highest level of essentialism to serve the rhetoric of the savage other who needs to be civilized.

John Palmer's reading is pertinent in this context. He regards Yanko as an inverted Kurtz, "a civilizable savage emerging from darkness to join himself with a white Intended and suffer the same destruction of self that Conrad's extremists along this axis usually suffer" (1968, 83). The animal imagery in terms of which Yanko is presented is indicative of the non-human status he is accorded in this hostile environment. After his night of ordeal, he is found the next day in a pig-pound and in Smith's account he is "indeed a sort of wild animal" (*TS*, 126). When this "horrid-looking man" (*TS*, 118) first lands in England, the driver of a milk-cart whips him, children throw stones at him, and a woman beats him "courageously with her umbrella over the head" (*TS*, 119) before fleeing from the sight of him. Even in death he resembles an animal. When he dies of a fever, the doctor finds him lying face down with "his body in a puddle" (*TS*, 140).

Like any "civilizable savage", or Shakespearean Caliban, Yanko learns the English language which he speaks like an alien to the tongue. He soon manifests traits of civilized conduct when he begins to till the land and milk the cows. He can sing and dance and literally rise above the others who are weighed down by the hum-drum routine of their dreary lives: "He vaulted over the stiles, paced these slopes with a long elastic stride that made him noticeable at a great distance, and had lustrous black eyes. He was so different from the mankind around [. . .]" (*TS*, 111). As he begins to be accepted in society, "people became used to see him. But they never became used to him" (*TS*, 132). He remains the quintessential exile, alienated and uncertain of his future, "like a man transplanted into another planet [. . .] separated by an immense space from his past and by an immense ignorance from his future" (*TS*, 132). After he rescues Mr. Swaffer's grandchild from drowning, he earns a place at the kitchen table where he is served his meals. All-in-all, he is the archetypical noble savage, the Other, both desired for his handsome good looks, courage and physicality but held in fear and awe.

It is not surprising therefore that the locals' xenophobia should reach fever-pitch when Yanko announces his intention to marry Amy: "It was only when he declared his purpose to get married that I fully understood how, for a hundred futile and inappreciable reasons, how - shall I say odious? - he was to all the countryside" (*TS*, 134). Amy's father had "a very genuine aversion to that match. He contended that the fellow was very good with sheep, but was not fit for any girl to marry" (*TS*, 135). It is also not surprising that the marriage of Amy and Yanko should break down inevitably. Although their child becomes the object of the tug-of-war between them, the general animosity of the society they live in has finally impacted on their idyllic marriage: "People were saying that Amy Foster was beginning to find out what sort of man she had married [. . .] His wife had snatched the child out of his arms one day as he sat on the doorstep crooning to it a song such as the mothers sing to babies in the mountains" (*TS*, 137). The breakdown of their marriage seems to be a vindication of the suspicions the

neighbours had harboured all along.

If Yanko Goorall is the alien who has been "civilized" and taught to communicate in a foreign tongue thus becoming "colonized" in the process, then his son, named Yanko (Little John), becomes the site for the father's reclamation of his cultural essence. Homi Bhabha opines that the threatened "loss" (Bhabha's emphasis) of meaningfulness in cross-cultural interpretation becomes a hermeneutic project for the restoration of culture's "essence" or authenticity (1994, 126). The specific cultural essence in Yanko's case is his lost language. To reclaim his own linguistic space, to give voice to his silenced self, he wants to teach his son his own language. This becomes the point of contention between husband and wife and leads to their tragedy.

It is a commonplace that language, as a culturally embedded phenomenon, is a potent signifier of identity and otherness as well as race. Benedict Anderson has written moving about this: "Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored" (1983, 140). Robert J. C. Young (1995, 64) contends that racial theory was established on two initially independent bases, namely physiology and language. He argues further, through detailed references to J. F. Blumenbach, the German professor of natural history who in the 1770s classified human races into twenty-eight varieties, that psychological classification was transformed by the discoveries of contemporary linguistics. The discovery of the Indo-European family of languages linked European languages to the ancient language of India, Sanskrit and an ultimate protolanguage originating in Asia from which the Aryan Caucasians had supposedly come. It was Blumenbach, according to Young, who invented the term "Caucasian" to describe a superior white race (65). This clash between Indo-European and Semitic languages formed the basis of the racial dialectic that dominated the thinking of the latter part of the nineteenth century until the twentieth century. How language came to be conflated with notions of superiority and inferiority can be witnessed in the division of the Aryan and Semitic races

which eventuated in the horrific finale of 1939-1945.

The cogency with which Edward Said (1995[1978], 233) makes this point on the correlation of race with culture and language and the complicity of linguists in this matter deserves more than a passing mention:

> It was assumed that if languages were as distinct from each other as the linguists said they were, then too the language users - their minds, cultures, potentials, and even their bodies - were different in similar ways. And these distinctions had the force of ontological, empirical truth behind them, together with the convincing demonstration of such truth in studies of origins, development, character, and destiny [. . .] A scientist could no more escape such origins in his research than an Oriental could escape "the Semites" or "the Arabs" or "the Indians" from which his present reality - debased, colonized, backward - excluded him [. . .].

In the same treatise, Said has argued that the Oriental was linked to such elements in Western society as delinquents, the insane, women, and the poor, having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien" (207). Yanko, who is believed to have come from the East, is regarded in a similar light. The narrator, Dr. Kennedy, tells the frame narrator that Yanko's "burst of rapid, senseless speech persuaded [Smith] at once that he had to do with an escaped lunatic [. . .] Smith has not in his heart given up his secret conviction of the man's essential insanity to this very day" (*TS*, 120). The issue of Yanko's foreign language, as well as his ensuing victimization by the society of Colebrook, is foreshadowed in one of the most resonant ironies in the story. We are told early in the story that Amy would feel pity for all kinds of creatures; that she was devoted to Mrs. Smith's dogs, cats and canaries (*TS*, 109). As much as the parrot exercised upon her a positive fascination, she was not able to rescue it when that outlandish bird, attacked by the cat, shrieked for help in human accents (*TS*, 109).

That outlandish bird which fascinated her, poignantly translates into Yanko Goorall whom she cannot save when he cries for just a little water in human accents.

Norman Page has described "Amy Foster" as "a moving allegory of [Conrad's] own experience, and when he fell ill Conrad, like Janko [sic] in that story [. . .] reverted to Polish in his delirium" (1986, Preface, xi). Jesse Conrad's sense of dislocation when her husband was in this state during their honeymoon is palpable in her own writing: "To see him lying in the white canopied bed, dark-faced with gleaming teeth and shining eyes, was sufficiently alarming, but to hear him muttering to himself in a strange tongue (he must have been speaking Polish), to be unable to penetrate the clouded mind or catch one intelligible word, was for a young, inexperienced girl truly awful" (1926, 35).

The trauma of geographical, cultural and linguistic dislocation has been the theme of two recent studies in the journal *Conradiana* in the same year, drawing parallels between Yanko Goorall and the writer. The first of these, by Sue Finkelstein, traces Conrad's emotional fault lines to his youth when he lost his mother at seven and his father at eleven: "[. . .] I do think that 'Amy Foster' in particular bears the marks of these losses. Thematically, it certainly does" (2000, 20). Whilst Finkelstein's essay makes a compelling argument to support how Conrad's "traumata" (21) reflect themselves in the theme of the story, it derives from the faulty premise that the story was written a year before the severe psychotic break of 1911 (20). This is stated in the opening sentence which functions as a theoretical framework for her paper. By common consent, the story was completed in 1901 and published in 1903. However faulty, the premise serves to underpin her cryptically-worded conclusion that Conrad "expresses his trauma-derived view of the world as filled with hope perpetually reborn out of hope perpetually, inevitably betrayed" (27).

The second study which appears in the third number of that journal is by Brian W. Shaffer who acknowledges Finkelstein's contribution but diverges slightly from her psychoanalytical reading to focus on the "traumatic nature of emigration in

particular, an experience dear to Conrad's heart" (2000,163). He points to the fact that Yanko Goorall is washed ashore upon the Kentish coast of England in an area not far from where Conrad took up residence in 1898. What is interesting about this essay from the standpoint of this thesis is the concluding sentence: "If 'Amy Foster' achieved nothing else, it represented and explored trauma and its relation to alterity long before our bloody present century made this critical task obvious, necessary, and even inescapable"(172).

A postcolonial critique of "Amy Foster" responds to the imperative of Shaffer's concluding remark. Ngugi wa Thiong'o claims that racism has been part of all the wars fought in Europe and the world since the seventeenth and eighteenth century (1993,123). As an issue of contention, racism continues to occupy international space in the twenty-first century. The task of interrogating notions of otherness and the false premises on which they are based, is the task of scholarship in our time, from the perspectival space of postcoloniality. Yanko Goorall's story is Conrad's exploration of the racist recesses of the human psyche, which manifest themselves in discrimination based on outward appearances. It is not a superior civilization that persecutes Yanko when he lands in Colebrook. Through his textured irony, Conrad makes this point clear. Mr. Foster who discriminates against Yanko on grounds of blatant racism and xenophobia is no paragon of virtue. Besides his economic interest in his daughter's employment, he has eloped with his widowed father's servant. Although Yanko's Catholicism is regarded as a superstitious creed by the villagers, their own form of Christianity is depraved and uncharitable. The narrator observes with dry irony that if Miss. Swaffer had not worn a crucifix, Yanko would have doubted if he were in a Christian country at all (*TS*, 128).

Displaced geographically, culturally and linguistically, Yanko is a metonymic embodiment of alterity, whose attempts to reclaim his linguistic and cultural integrity as a human being, end in failure. If Dr. Kennedy is the palimpsest on which Yanko's history is reinscribed or re-memoryed (to revert to Toni Morrison's

coinage), then his account of shipwrecked people is a resounding testimony to Yanko's Otherness: "Often the castaways were only saved from drowning to die miserably from starvation on a barren coast; others suffered violent death or else slavery, passing through years of precarious existence with people to whom their strangeness was an object of suspicion, dislike or fear" (*TS*, 113). The last three words of this quote encapsulate the essence of xenophobia. That Yanko's apprenticeship to Mr. Swaffer is "a form of slavery" has been observed by Gail Fraser ("The Short Fiction" 1996, 40). A benevolent slave master who is himself a bit of an "eccentric" (*TS*, 127), Mr. Swaffer emancipates Yanko when the latter decides to marry.

In the opening sentence of her essay titled, "'Oh, I hope he won't talk'. Narrative and Silence in 'Amy Foster'", Myrtle Hooper expresses puzzlement that Conrad should choose to name his story after the woman rather than the man (1996, 51). In a shrewd feminist reading, she proceeds to her conclusion that the real other in the story is not Yanko but the silenced Amy. Whilst I would concede that Amy also represents the other to a certain extent, I find it curious that Hooper fails to acknowledge anywhere in her article that the story had also been given alternative working titles. From the prominence she gives to the naming of the story, the omission is surprising, to say the least. However, it does serve to bolster her feminist stance, or as she admits, her "feminine sense of injustice" (53). In a letter to his literary agent Pinker, dated 3 June 1901, Conrad refers to these titles: "[. . .] the short story (entitled - either 'A Husband' or 'A Castaway') will be ready in a week" (Karl and Davies 1986, 330). It is quite possible, as Hooper reasons, that Conrad decided to re-name the story after the wife in order to give her a voice after effectively silencing her. My reading, however, is that the alternative titles do suggest that Yanko occupied central space in Conrad's consciousness during the writing of the story, but in a mimetic and performative gesture the writer erases Yanko Goorall's identity from the title, just as the entire village, including Amy Foster, has elided his history in that village. This process

of erasure is hinted at in the ominous response of Amy's father to news of Yanko's death from Kennedy: "I don't know that it isn't for the best" (*TS*, 141). The smothering of Yanko's voice, which once provided a lively and dramatic interlude in the provincial lives of the villagers, is almost achieved by the mother's "hanging over the boy's cot in a very passion of maternal tenderness" (*TS*, 142). Almost, but not quite. If the rampant xenophobia of the villagers succeeds in obliterating the history of Yanko Goorall, a devout believer who never failed to say his prayers, a trace of it, the only one in Colebrook, remains in one spot - the "marriage register of the parish" (*TS*, 133). Yanko's identity has found sanctuary in the church even if his fellow men deny him a place in their hearts.

VI.

In considering the four works of short fiction - "Karain", "An Outpost of Progress", "Falk" and "Amy Foster" - this chapter has attempted to interrogate the role of agency and authority in the conception of identity in colonialist discourses of alterity. By whose authority can Karain, Makola, Falk and Yanko Goorall be termed savages or the other/Other? In the context of sexual identity, Judith Butler (1993, 20) poses the question: If performativity is constructed as that power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration, how are we to understand the limits of such production, the constraints under which such production occurs? Transposing Butler's question to the context of colonial discourse and identity construction, an answer might be found in reading Conrad "contrapuntally", to borrow a concept from Said (1994[1993], 59). Such a reading implies a simultaneous awareness of metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which the dominating discourse acts. Metropolitan narrative, or imperialist discourse, forecloses on the possibility of individual agency and authority in the construction of identity. The primitive remains primitive and the savage, savage. Homi Bhabha (1994, 77-78) regards such knowledge of the

colonial other as "arrested and fetishistic" and as "that limited form of otherness" which he refers to as the "stereotype". Through the interstices of the dominating discourses, as this chapter has illustrated, the opposite picture of alterity emerges in which identities are never fixed but in the process of production or performance, as evinced in the characters of Karain, Makola, Falk and Yanko. Each of these characters defies the stereotype of the other/Other, be it the inscrutable Oriental, the uncivilized savage or cannibal, or the ethnic intruder.

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

RACE AND MISCEGENATION IN *ALMAYER'S FOLLY: A STORY OF AN EASTERN RIVER*

> Bulangi was a safe man. In the network of crooked channels no white man could find his way. White men were strong, but very foolish. It was undesirable to fight them, but deception was easy. (*AF*, 84)

> "Forget that you ever looked at a white face; forget their words; forget their thoughts. They speak lies. And they think lies because they despise us that are better than they are, but not so strong. Forget their friendship and their contempt; forget their many gods." (*AF*, 151)

> Must we always polarize in order to polemicize? Are we trapped in a politics of struggle where the representation of social antagonisms and historical contradictions can take no other form than a binarism of theory vs politics? [. . .] Is our only way out of such dualism the espousal of an implacable oppositionality or the invention of an originary counter-myth of radical purity? (Homi K. Bhabha 1994, 19)

I.

The central question that drives this chapter is how Conrad's characters negotiate the social, cultural and racial spaces that divide them in intercultural contact zones on the periphery of empire. Allied to this is the other question that this thesis poses at large: Is it possible to escape the stultifying effects of the Manichean binaries of "us" and "them" encapsulated in the first two epigraphs to this chapter, and rhetorically interrogated by Homi Bhabha in the third epigraph?

In other words, is there a third space between these antagonistic positions in which identity may be constructed? Framed by the dominant constructs of race, gender and miscegenation which are deployed by the writer to pit one sex against the other, as well as one race against the other in a colonizer/colonized paradigm, Conrad's first novel offers a rich matrix for the investigation of the dialectic of race, alterity, gender and cultural identity, as well as the construction and subversion of stereotypes.

Stereotyping, according to Roland Barthes (1977, 199), is a sad affair since it is constituted by "a necrosis of language, a prosthesis brought in to fill a hole in writing". He goes on further to say that although the stereotype occasions laughter, it takes itself seriously and believes itself to be the truth. Homi Bhabha avers that the stereotype, which is a major discursive strategy of colonial discourse, "is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" (1994, 66). The use of the stereotype was pressed into the service of colonial discourse as a convenient signifier of cultural difference, alterity and fixity. That Conrad was acutely sensitive to the problematic of human beings divided along the axis of "us" and "them" based largely on the rigidity of racial stereotypes, is evident in his Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly* in the Dent Collected Edition of 1947. In rebuttal to a female critic, "distinguished in the world of letters", who summed up her disapproval of his short fiction set in far-off lands with the epithet "decivilized", Conrad writes:

> The critic and the judge seems to think that in those distant lands all joy is a yell and a war dance, all pathos is a howl and a ghastly grin of filed teeth, and that the solution of all problems is found in the barrel of a revolver or on the point of an assegai. And yet it is not so [. . .] The picture of life, there as here, is drawn with the same elaboration of detail, coloured with the same tints. Only in the cruel serenity of the sky, under the merciless brilliance of

> the sun, the dazzled eye misses the delicate detail, sees only the strong outlines, while the colours, in the steady light, seem crude and without shadow. Nevertheless it is the same picture. And there is a bond between us and that humanity so far away. (*AF*, vii)

Jeremy Hawthorn (1982, 48), in an essay on individuality and characterization in the modernist novel, asserts that modern human subjectivity had become not just private but the site of contradictions. Unlike an epic such as the *Odyssey* where the hero lives in harmony with his society and its collective psyche, the modern novel depicts the tension between the private individual and the public. Hawthorn concludes by citing the novels of Kafka and Camus, which may not give us a view of a better world but they do undermine the sort of consciousness generated and encouraged by capitalist society. At the *fin de siècle* Conrad's Malayan novels explore human subjectivities which are no longer embedded in their societies or, to repeat Benedict Anderson's term, "imagined communities", with their comforting myths and value systems. His protagonists are creations of a diasporic world, often displaced or disembodied from their communities and placed in alien surroundings in contact zones with other races and cultures. Mary Louise Pratt (1992, 6) has coined the term "contact zone" to refer to this space of colonial encounters, a space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.

A motif which is common to "Karain" and its predecessor *Almayer's Folly* is that of miscegenation. The event which gives impetus to the central theme of revenge in "Karain" is the relationship between an unnamed Dutchman and an unnamed Malay woman who is the sister of Pata Matara. The woman, who had been promised to a young man of her own race, disgraced her people by moving into the house of the Dutchman who had settled amongst the Malays. Pata Matara swears vengeance on them both and this results in the relentless pursuit of the

lovers by the brother and Karain. Although Pata Matara's sister is not given a name, or an identity, or a voice of her own, she has an independent spirit that militates against the norms of her society. Karain describes her as a great and wilful lady whom he had once seen carried high on the shoulders of slaves with her face unveiled (*TU,* 29). For a Muslim woman to go unveiled, especially in the company of men, is regarded by her society as an act of impropriety, even sexual provocation. This gesture of defiance, which occupies but a small space in "Karain", becomes a predominant motif in the first two novels of Conrad which are energized by the themes of racial encounters and miscegenation. Unlike the woman in "Karain", Nina and Aïssa, the protagonists of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* respectively, are fully-fledged characters who defy the boundaries of their social and cultural space and in the process not only do they subvert the colonial stereotype of the passive, exotic woman but also forge their own cultural identities.

According to Raymond Williams (1958, 132), the word "culture" is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. Derived from the Latin *cultura* and *colere*, the word had a range of meanings such as inhabit, cultivate, attend, protect, honour and worship. In time, suggests Robert J. C. Young (1995, 31), the idea of honour and worship, inherent in cultura, was assumed by Christianity, whilst the idea of inhabit, from the Latin *colonus* (farmer), came to denote a colony. Hence, concludes Young, the notion of colonization is at the heart of the meaning of culture, "or culture always involves a form of colonization" (31). Edward Said (1994[1993], xii-xv) identifies two main strands in the use of the term culture. The one sense denotes the practices like the arts of description, communication and representation. The other sense, which denotes a society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, has troubling connotations. It is from this second meaning that the word culture modulates into ideas of nation, state and identity, and as Said proclaims, becomes associated "aggressively" with "us" and "them" and almost always with some

"degree of xenophobia" (1994[1993], xiii). From this point on, culture is often viewed along the oppositional axes of culture versus nature; culture versus civilization; and culture versus anarchy, which echoes Matthew Arnold's treatise "Culture and Anarchy", a foundation text on the discourse of culture in the late nineteenth century.

The genealogy of the term culture, Robert Young proposes, is not a matter of progress but rather one of conflictual divisions, participating in a complex, hybridized economy that is never at ease with itself (1995, 30). Young refers to culture as the "willing accomplices" of gender, class and race; it is never essentialist, even when it aspires to be, because it is always a dialectical process, inscribing and expelling its own alterity. Perhaps unconsciously, Young is echoing Said's ideas of culture expressed a year or two prior to his own study. In his project, *Culture and Imperialism* (1994[1993]), Said posits culture as a kind of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a "placid realm of Apollonian gentility, culture can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another" (xiv). The problem with this configuration of culture, as Said registers, is that it entails not only venerating one's culture but thinking of it as somehow divorced from the everyday world and transcending it. Such a view, that is antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations (xv), is what Said sets out to controvert in this seminal postcolonial critique. All the texts of cultural products that he examines are implicated in the imperial process of which they were manifestly a part. In his discussion of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, for example, Said excavates the question of Britain's fraught relationship with its penal colony, Australia. While a character such as Magwitch is allowed to prosper through his labour, he is not allowed to return to England. It was this social apartheid which produced Australia. The East, on the other hand, where Britain's other colonies offered a sense of normality, becomes the trading ground for gentlemen such as Pip and Herbert Pocket. Traditional readings of *Great*

Expectations ignore such issues of empire embedded in the works of Dickens and the Victorians. A new generation of scholars, Said maintains, has seen in "such great texts of Western literature a standing interest in what was considered a lesser world, populated with lesser people of colour, portrayed as open to the intervention of so many Robinson Crusoes" (xviii).

When Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* was published in 1885, Charles Dickens, the most prolific, and arguably the greatest English novelist of the Victorian period, had died fifteen years earlier. Dickens, whose genius was challenged in the early twentieth century by none other than the redoubtable F. R. Leavis, confined himself to the social injustices of his time. The closest this metropolitan writer came to critique empire - and obliquely at that - was in *Bleak House* (1853), in which the "telescopic philanthropy" of Mrs. Jellyby, focussed on some far-flung, fictitious African colony, becomes the object of his inimitable satire. Conrad, writing at the end of that century, cast his modernist authorial gaze over a wider geographical world and brought within the ambit of his fictional space people of different races, nationalities, religions and customs. Whilst he was not the only writer based in England to write about other people as his contemporaries such as Kipling and Stevenson were doing, the characters in his early novels were not simply exotic creations of his Homeric world but flesh-and-blood individuals with lives of their own. They may represent the other "lesser people of colour", to hark back to Said's words in the previous paragraph, but they defy the exotic stereotypes scripted in the popular Edwardian imagination. Perhaps it is the strangeness of his subject matter which predisposed it to the cursory treatment of early scholars who perceived the Malayan works in terms of the dichotomies of nature and nurture, or anarchy as opposed to culture. These were the predominant tropes of Conradian criticism which reflected the interests and investment of society and culture, not to mention academia in the early twentieth century, which will be considered presently.

Homi Bhabha (1994, 20-21) has posed the question: "Is the language of theory

merely another power play of the culturally privileged Western elite to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge question?" The question is pertinent to the theoretical underpinnings of the New Criticism of the Anglo-American school of the early to mid-twentieth century. Notwithstanding the fact that Bhabha frames this question in relation to the new language of theoretical critique such as semiotics, poststructuralist, and the rest, the question is important as a mode of interrogation into the critical practice of a scholar such as F. R. Leavis who not only wielded tremendous authority but also inaugurated the "great tradition" of English literature in 1948, placing Conrad in the company of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, D. H. Lawrence, and, as an afterthought, a clinically circumscribed Charles Dickens. The power of Leavis's edict is manifest, for example, in his arbitrary treatment of Dickens. Singling out *Hard Times* as a "masterpiece", he regards this work as the only one in the writer's oeuvre which can claim to be "a completely serious work of art" (1972[1948], 258)!

The modernist sensibility of literary criticism, in reaction to the opulence and debility of the Edwardian tradition, stressed the notion of discipline in matters of emotion and expression. A spare, muscular prose style was valorized above the vaguely ornate and sentimental prose which characterised much of the writing of this period, hence the emphasis in Leavisean criticism on concrete experience, disciplined emotion and fidelity to artistic form. Sketching the developments in literary criticism in the twentieth century, John Holloway (1973[1961], 94-95) states that English literature was a major part of higher education and was viewed as a substitute for religion which was on the decline. In this regard, he cites Matthew Arnold who said that we would have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Holloway also cites "the most important of modern teacher-critics, F. R. Leavis", who echoed Arnold's plea for the preservation of literary tradition. The disintegration of society was to be countered by a literary tradition that, whilst accommodating the new and the iconoclastic, insisted on an equipoise between emotion and expression. When Leavis regards Conrad highly,

it is in terms of moral significance, concrete experience, tradition, discipline and moral ideal (1972[1948], 229). These are his touchstones of literary merit, which he applies to works such as *Nostromo* and the other generally acknowledged great works of Conrad's middle phase. *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands* and *Tales of Unrest*, on the other hand, are summarily dismissed: "Those excessively adjectival studies in the Malayan exotic of Conrad's earliest vein [. . .] their wearying exoticism, and their 'picturesque' human interest [. . .] aren't easy to re-read" (218). Thus, Leavis had spoken, way back in 1941 when his articles on Conrad were first published in *Scrutiny* of which he was the editor. His impact on literary studies until the early 1970s is a testimony to the institutionalized power of academia and academics.

A tendency to regard Conrad's Malayan novels as studies of the exotic continued for at least the next three decades, as evinced in the critique of Guerard (1958), Karl (1960), Gurko (1979 [1962]), Fleishman (1967) and Palmer (1968). Gurko is of the opinion that Conrad's early work presents the problem of the writer's struggle to master nature instead of being mastered by it (1979[1962], 53). His overall assessment of *Almayer's Folly* is that the landscape in it is an ornamental backdrop, unrelated to the human drama that is enacted in the novel: "Two dramas go on side by side in *Almayer's Folly*, the drama of nature and the drama of man. They seldom meet" (56). Elsewhere in his account, Gurko remarks on the "verbal sludge" and "the other paraphernalia of the exotic East" which mar the quality of the novel. Here, Gurko echoes Guerard, who sees no real centre of interest in the novel, which evidences the "prose of an inexperienced writer refusing to omit any of the single adjectives each noun deserves" (Guerard 1958, 78), which in turn echoes Leavis's quarrel with the "adjectival" quality in his Malayan works. What is worth noting about the responses to *Almayer's Folly* by critics writing in the tradition of Leavis is that they are in marked contrast to the general reception of the novel in Conrad's own time. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska dated 02 May 1895, Conrad wrote: "The Scottish dailies have begun

to review my *Folly*. Brief, journalistic, but full of praise! Above all, the *Scotsman*, the major Edinburgh paper, is almost enthusiastic. The *Glasgow Herald* speaks with a more restrained benevolence" (Karl and Davies 1983, 214).

Essentially, there is nothing pernicious about the aesthetics of the New Criticism. Scholars such as Matthew Arnold, I. A. Richards, and Leavis attempted to countervail the numbing effect of popular literature and the media at the time, much like the concern of educators in our time. What is notable about the criticism of this period was the occlusion of issues such as race, class and sex, which Henry Louis Gates (1986, 4) has referred to as "unseemly" or "untoward" notions in the composition of a literary work of art. A reassessment of Conrad's Malayan tales from a postcolonial space recuperates such issues which were either ignored or glossed over by early Conradian scholars.

Daniel R. Schwarz (1980, 3) concedes an important place for *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* in the writer's career, viewing them as works which are proleptic of "issues and concerns which led to the development of Conrad's major work". He sees in the figure of Tom Lingard an early template for Kurtz in the Congo, Jim on Patusan, and Gould in Costaguana. Breaking ranks with some of the major critics of the earlier phase, Schwarz not only devotes an entire chapter to both early novels, but also tackles the issues of intercultural and interracial contact. He even makes so bold as to claim that Conrad broke away from the late Victorian notion shared by the Fabians, Shaw, Cunninghame and Butler that Western civilization was of a superior quality to the more primitive kinds of human life. This distinction between civilized white man and savage native Schwarz dismisses as fundamentally apocryphal (16). Despite these insights which constitute a significant advance in Conradian studies, Schwarz cannot break entirely free from the legacy of his predecessors as revealed by some of the curious, if not surprising, comments he offers on the theme of interracial sexual relationships. Purporting to draw upon biographical parallels between writer and character, he declares: "Yet Conrad's idealization of heterosexual love is

undermined by his obsessive treatment of Victorian sexual taboos: miscegenation, incest and adultery. That sexuality so frequently focuses on these taboos reflects his unconscious discomfort with the subject of sex" (7-8). In Schwarz's reading, Sambir becomes Almayer's and Willems's personal nemesis once they violate sexual taboos. Schwarz's argument, which is strongly evocative of previous comments on the Malayan jungle and its corrupting influence on the Westerner, is that these European men succumb to the lure of the Malay women who hold the promise of joy and beauty but represent "poison and decay" - words adduced from the text of *An Outcast of the Islands* (70), where tropical life is the subject of narratorial comment. Pursuing this line of argument, Schwarz resorts to the common currency of colonialist discourse to arrive at the following judgement of Willems (and Almayer by implication): "Willems unwillingly surrenders to savagery and moral darkness after he is revealed as an embezzler" (9). Crudely stated, Schwarz seems to be saying that when white men like Almayer or Willems fall from grace, they surrender to their baser instincts by allowing themselves to be seduced by the charm of native women. This equation of interracial sex with moral failure vitiates much of the trenchant criticism of the early novels by this critic.

Robert Young (1995, 181) maintains that nineteenth-century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing differentiations between self and the other, but that they were also about a fascination with people transgressing societal taboos such as incest and miscegenation. But this was not simply a matter of sexual or cultural encounter, but reflected the forms of sexual exchange which were the mirrors and consequences of the modes of exchange of property. The history of the meanings of the word "commerce" includes the exchange of merchandise as well as bodies in marital and sexual relationships. Romantic and Victorian fiction, such as the novels of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters, is replete with examples of young men and women seeking to make their fortune in marriages of convenience. On the subject of "colonial desire", Young concludes:

> It was therefore wholly appropriate that sexual exchange, and its miscegenated product which captures the violent, antagonistic power relations of sexual and cultural diffusion, should become the dominant paradigm through which the passionate economic and political trafficking of colonialism was conceived. Perhaps this begins to explain why our own forms of racism remain so intimately bound up with sexuality and desire. (182)

II.

Nowhere is this colonial paradigm of economic, political and human trafficking more vividly illustrated than in the opening paragraphs of *Almayer's Folly*. Cedric Watts (1993[1982],123) elucidates the meaning of the dramatic opening of the story, "'KASPAR! Makan!'". "Kaspar", as we learn later, is Almayer's first name; "Makan", explains Watts, is Malay for "Come to dinner!". Woken abruptly from his reverie and summoned to dinner by the shrill voice of his detested Malay wife, Almayer ponders his wasted life in a loveless marriage of convenience and in the pursuit of fabulous wealth:

> Almayer's thoughts were often busy with gold; gold he had failed to secure; gold the others had secured - dishonestly, of course - or gold he meant to secure yet, through his own honest exertions, for himself and Nina. He absorbed himself in his dream of wealth and power away from the coast where he had dwelt for so many years, forgetting the bitterness of toil and strife in the vision of a great and splendid reward. They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. (*AF*, 3)

Almayer's reflection announces the central concerns of the novel: the pursuit of money and power regardless of the means to attain them, and the dynamics of racial and cultural encounter. His daughter Nina is the miscegenated product of his marriage to the young Malay girl, the only surviving member of a family of pirates killed in a skirmish with Tom Lingard. In his misplaced benevolence, Lingard offered Almayer a bribe to marry the girl after he had her educated at a convent school for four years. When making the proposition to Almayer, Lingard warns him: "'And don't you kick because you're white! [. . .] None of that with me! Nobody will see the colour of your wife's skin. The dollars are too thick for that, I tell you! And mind you, they will be thicker yet before I die'" (*AF*, 10).

There can be no mistaking the authorial intention to expose the soiled underbelly of colonialism and the crass motives of its representatives such as Lingard and Almayer, a point that is lost on some postcolonial/feminist critics who are preoccupied, as Conrad's detractors are, with his alleged racism and negative portrayal of native women. This is not to turn a blind eye to such instances in the novel, of which there are many. It is to register the omniscient gaze of the narrator who opens up to scrutiny the inherent prejudices of the colonizer and the colonized alike. Accepting the promised bribe, Almayer reflects: "As to the other side of the picture - the companionship for life of a Malay girl, that legacy of a boatful of pirates - there was only within him a confused consciousness of shame that he a white man - Still, a convent education of four years - and then she may mercifully die. He was always lucky, and money is powerful! Go through it. Why not?" (*AF*, 10). That Almayer has not put aside the thought of murdering his wife at a later stage is ignored by those critics who have made the facile observation that Mrs. Almayer (who, incidentally, is not given a name) chews betel nut and descends into savagery. The fact that Lingard and Almayer alienate the child Nina from her is also ignored. Despised by her husband and treated as a low-priced commodity rather than a wife, Mrs. Almayer lives alone in a house built for her. Almayer is not only a racist but a bigot as well. Whilst he despises his Malay

wife because of her race, he has no compunctions about doting on Dain Maroola, a Malay prince, who will assist him in making his fortune. But that devotion will be short-lived. When Dain Maroola elopes with his daughter, the latent racism in him surfaces and overpowers him, contributing to his pitiful demise.

Tom Lingard, who is the intertextual linch-pin in the Malayan trilogy, is the arch-colonialist. Though physically absent in the novel, he is a catalyst in the brokering of power relations between men and men, and men and women. Lingard, one of those men whom the Dutch referred to as "English pedlars" (*AF*, 7), invaded the Malay Archipelago in search of money and adventure. The boldest of them all, who could out-drink any of the others ("himself unaffected by any amount of liquor", *AF*, 8), he was soon recognized as the Rajah-Laut, the King of the Sea. A swashbuckling adventurer like the rest who traded illicitly in guns and ammunition, he rose above the common crowd because "[he] had discovered a river!" (*AF*, 7). Like other colonial adventurers such as Dr. David Livingstone who "discovered" the Victoria Falls for his Queen and country, notwithstanding that the Falls had already been known to the local inhabitants for thousands of years as the "Smoke that Thunders", Tom Lingard discovers a river and stakes his claim to the Archipelago. He takes a paternal interest in Almayer, insisting that he calls him father, the way the Malay girl does, and promises him millions if he marries his adopted daughter. Needless to say, both father and surrogate son are endowed with febrile imaginations and have grandiose dreams of success. Even after Lingard goes off to some place in Europe, he still has a grip on Almayer's imagination. Like any colonial power exercising imperial dominance from some part of Europe, Lingard holds Almayer in thrall in a manner akin to the panoptic paradigm of surveillance and control espoused by Foucault.

Twenty-five years after Lingard's promise of stupendous wealth, which enslaves Almayer in an unhappy alliance with a nameless Malay woman, it is Almayer who has to live the brutal reality of his shattered dreams engendered by another of Lingard's many colonial transactions - the brokering of Almayer's

marriage. Indeed, the power of Lingard's imperial desire transferred to his protégé is so great that it results in the latter's building his new house for the use of future engineers, agents or settlers of the new British Borneo Company. This trading post, nicknamed "Almayer's Folly" by the visiting British forces, had "sheltered Almayer's young hopes, his foolish dream of [a] splendid future" (*AF*, 203). After Nina's departure, Almayer sets fire to the building in a gesture that symbolises both the destruction of his delusions of grandeur as well as the end of Lingard's empire which had begun in violence and bloodshed when Lingard imposed his authority on the local Malays.

John Palmer (1968, 51), who describes *Almayer's Folly* as " a provocative first novel but a curiously mixed one", discerns three centres of interest in it: the destruction of Almayer, the romance between his daughter and the native Dain Maroola, and the tangled background of jungle scenery and the native intrigue against which these dramas are played out. Having drawn the common analogues between Almayer and the later Jim and Kurtz, he makes a telling observation. Almayer, he posits, moves towards darkness, whilst "Dain Maroola, savage, engaged in discovering romantic illusion" (52), moves towards light; in the middle is Nina, wavering between two worlds. The conventional motifs of light versus darkness, and savagery versus civilization, have served the function of criticism well, especially in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. However, out of Palmer's elaborate conceit of light and darkness surface three comments of note. Firstly, that the novel turns into a primitive romance, with Almayer as villain (52); secondly, that the lovers emerge finally from jungle darkness into the glare of civilization (53); and thirdly, complementing this human drama, Palmer adds, are the background struggles of vegetation, and at the borderline of light and darkness, a grotesque conflict of human artifact and formless tropical energy (54). The proliferation of the word "savage" in Palmer's account, which is used no fewer than five times, is only matched by the omniscient narrator's liberal permutations of the terms "primitive" and "savage" in the novel. Palmer's juxtaposition of

"artifact" with "tropical energy" is redolent of the nature/culture paradigm which informs early Conradian criticism. It echoes, for example, Leo Gurko, who describes the novel as a struggle for mastery over nature. The contention by Palmer that the lovers emerge into the glare of civilization is problematic. If by "civilization" he means the opposite of those qualities which Almayer represents - greed, racial bigotry and possibly incestuous desire, as suggested by Guerard (1958, 71), then it is valid; but the world that Nina and Dain will go to will be far from "civilized" as the word is commonly understood. Dain, who will most likely practise polygamy as is the custom in his culture (a fact Mrs. Almayer brings to Nina's attention later), will be involved in his own internecine tribal wars. Hence, the juxtaposition of civilization and savagery is a highly fraught issue in the novel, and it defies any easy resolution as Conrad has professed in his Author's Note to the novel (*AF*, vii-viii) where he deprecates the convenience of stereotyping.

The ironies inherent in stereotyping appear throughout Conrad's work, especially in the Malayan works which explore subjectivities in contact zones where different races and nations interact. Homi Bhabha, writing at the end of the twentieth century, defines that moment as one in which space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion (1994, 1). Conrad, writing at the end of the previous millennium, was acutely conscious of the complex nature of subjectivity. In one example in *Almayer's Folly*, we have the protagonist wondering whether Dain would betray him: "Trusting to Malays was poor work; but then even Malays have some sense and understand their own interest" (*AF*, 14). Jeremy Hawthorn (1990, 7) submits that the use of Free Indirect Discourse exploits the potential for irony that depends upon a contrast between the point of view of the character and that of the narrator or narrative perspective. In this instance, the racist stereotyping of the Malays is clearly the verbalized thoughts of Almayer. After simplistically doubting their honesty, he condescendingly attributes to them a semblance of intelligence and cunning. It is richly ironic that he should not trust

Dain entirely to help him attain riches when his surrogate father Lingard has all but abandoned him to his fate. That he does not trust Dain is also ironic in a different sense, as the latter will betray him but in a manner he least suspects. Finally, he does not realize that he will be outwitted and destroyed by the machinations of his wife, Mrs. Almayer, and Dain, both of whom, in his eyes, belong to an inferior order of existence.

The character of Mrs. Almayer who is imbricated in the novel's texture of the primitive and the savage, has not received the kind of attention it deserves, a probable exception being the work of Linda Dryden (2000, 71-74) who devotes a sub-chapter to both Babalatchi and Mrs. Almayer. Dryden appropriately comments that Mrs. Almayer is the product of the blunders of the well-intentioned Lingard (74). Of all the characters in the book, she has suffered the most. The word "savage" is used time and again in various contexts relating to her. On the day when Lingard found her under the bodies of the dead pirates when she was still a girl, she had been fighting him and his forces like the rest of her people. As she watches the funeral pile of the men who had fought the redoubtable Rajah-Laut, she sees her life disappear after "her own savage manner" (*AF*, 21). During her four years at the convent school, regarding Lingard as her master, she "nourished [the] hope of finding favour in his eyes and ultimately becoming his wife, counsellor, and guide" (*AF*, 22). Two years after the marriage of convenience to Almayer, Nina is born. As Nina grows closer to her father, Mrs. Almayer begins to despise her husband and treats him with a "savage contempt" (*AF*, 25), expressed by outbursts of "savage invective" (*AF*, 25). The marriage has always been a travesty. Mrs. Almayer's open contempt pales into insignificance when compared to her husband's secret desire right from the outset to get rid of her some day. When she loses her youthful beauty and begins to tear down the curtains and burn the furniture in her frequent outbursts, her husband plans to murder her "in an undecided but feeble sort of way" (*AF*, 26). After being orphaned by Lingard, a fact he would communicate to "shore loafers" (*AF*, 23),

Mrs. Almayer suffers her second great trauma when Nina is taken away from her by Lingard. Having failed to cast Mrs. Almayer in an image consonant with his idea of civilization, Tom Lingard decides to do the same with Nina. As Nina is taken away by Lingard in a boat to a Protestant school in Singapore, Mrs. Almayer swims after the child, only to be pursued by Almayer and dragged back by her hair amidst her cries and curses. Ten years later Nina returns, a tall and beautiful woman, whose "startled expression common to Malay womankind [is] modified by a thoughtful tinge inherited from her European ancestry" (*AF*, 29). In this context, Allan Simmons (1997, 166) has noted that there are two narrative voices that are constantly present in the novel, the Occidental and the Oriental. He argues that Nina's "superior intelligence" promotes the European side of her descent at the expense of the Malay, whilst her Malay womanhood introduces the eroticism associated with the Oriental female in the Occidental imagination. Likewise, Ian Watt suggests that Conrad, in keeping with Darwinian terms of biological determinism, makes inherited racial characteristics an important element in the novel (1980, 45). However, Watt concedes that Conrad does not fully share the assumptions of his time, making heredity and environment merely contingent circumstances through which a more universal view of life works itself out. Though Nina inherits racial characteristics from her father, she is not white, "not quite", to echo the words of Homi Bhabha in the context of his discussion on mimicry (1994, 86). Much to Almayer's regret, Nina seems to accept the "savage intrusion" (*AF*, 33) of the mother in their daily lives. Gradually, Mrs. Almayer sheds her veneer of Western civilization (a debatable postulate in itself), and relapses into the lifestyle of her own people. The fact that she begins to burn down the furniture is not the sign of any latent savagery or barbarism, but an expected and violent reaction to the violence done to her person by Lingard and Almayer, but especially the former who tears her away from her roots and attempts to give her a new religious faith and identity:

> But her destiny in the rough hands of the old sea-dog, acting under unreasoning impulses of the heart, took a strange and to her a terrible shape. She bore it all - the restraint and the teaching and the new faith - with calm submission, concealing her hate and contempt for all that new life. She learned the language very easily, yet understood but little of the new faith the good sisters taught her, assimilating quickly only the superstitious elements of the religion. (*AF*, 22)

Having lived in both worlds, Mrs. Almayer, like Nina after her, decides to fashion her own identity, living amongst her own people and using the curtains to make sarongs for the slave girls, and the wood from the furniture to boil rice for the commune. To the Western eye, the betel-nut chewing woman might represent a regression to the primitive and savage, but for Mrs. Almayer it represents a life of altruism towards her people and an escape from a sterile marriage that has been as contrived and meaningless as her imposed Western identity. In any event, for her it is a welcome alternative to the life-in-death situation of her husband who does little but live in his dreams.

Terms such as "civilized" , "savage", and its synonym "primitive", are far from being merely neutral and denotative. They are loaded terms which function as signifiers of otherness or alterity. The words "primitive" and "savage" are used to designate a group or population that is different and perceived as being markedly inferior. Marianna Torgovnick, in her polemical treatise on the nature of the primitive, claims that these "Others are processed [. . .] through a variety of tropes which see them as a threatening horde, a faceless mass, promiscuous, breeding, inferior - and at the furthest edge, exterminatable" (1990, 18). In her estimate, Western thinking frequently substitutes versions of the primitive for some of its deepest obsessions and in this way the West constructs and uses the primitive for its own ends. Whilst the primitive, in certain contexts, is used to denote backwardness, in others it is used to connote desirable values such as freedom

from stuffy societal restraint or the celebration of sexuality, as in some of D. H. Lawrence's writings. By whose agency and authority Mrs. Almayer, or Babalatchi for that matter, may be regarded as a savage or primitive would depend on the ideological, racial or cultural investment involved in such a construction. If Mrs. Almayer is to be perceived as the other, then she has to be seen in terms of savagery. On the other hand, if Lingard and his pathetic protégé Almayer are perceived as "one of us", as representatives of empire and as the bearers of light and civilization, then their exploits on the Malay Archipelago have to be downplayed, as Lingard's crass mercenary intentions are euphemistically described: "mysterious work which was only spoken of in hints, but was understood to relate to gold and diamonds in the interior of the island" (*AF*, 24). For all his misguided intentions to civilize Mrs. Almayer and Nina, and for all his pretensions to civilization, the Tom Lingard of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* comes across as an imperialist adventurer and dreamer, not unlike Almayer, and a downright buccaneer to boot against whom not even a tribe of pirates such as Mrs. Almayer's family stands a chance. This Lingard is different from the younger, idealistic character in *The Rescue* who, despite his failings, is driven by a greater sense of altruism and egalitarianism.

Goonetilleke has pointedly remarked that in the Malayan works European characters are at a stage of civilization "different" from the Malayans and have markedly different motives (1990, 14). The use of the word "different" is significant. Though it emphasizes difference, it does not imply superiority or inferiority. Moreover, the searching test for Europeans in these novels is posed by human complications rather than by nature. Goonetilleke, in contradistinction to critics such as Guerard, Gurko and Schwarz, avers that Almayer and Jim find themselves in difficulties not because of the menace of Malayan surroundings, but because of their own frailties and human opponents. This is a radical departure from the stereotypical responses of those earlier critics who view *Almayer's Folly* and the other Malayan works in terms of the binaries of nature and culture, or

savagery and civilization. Ian Watt, a fond but highly vigorous reader of Joseph Conrad, rightly interprets the various moods of nature in the novel not as a defect, or a symbolic reflection of the corruption of native life to which Europeans such as Almayer fall prey, but as suggesting an atmosphere of doomed and stagnant enclosure from which, like Almayer and Nina, we want out (Watt 1980, 44). Though there is no doubting the "adjectival" insistence in the evocation of the exotic East, to quote Leavis's epithet once more, at a basic level these descriptions which enact the struggle for survival in nature, foreshadow the human struggles and tragedies of people such as Mrs. Almayer and Almayer. Adducing the well-known excerpt after the lovers' tryst, beginning with "[the] two nutshells with their occupants floated quietly side by side" (*AF*, 71), Watt comments that nature's cycle begins in death and decay, and though some spectacular flowers may manage to thrust themselves up into the sunshine, they soon fade, die, and sink back into the corruption where they began (45).

Watt also concurs that this passage, with its surfeit of jungle imagery, is reminiscent of an Oriental travelogue. It is a well-known fact that although Conrad did write with an eye to the popular marketplace, he did not write popular fiction. Books about the exotic, especially by practitioners such as R. L. Stevenson, Rudyard Kipling and Rider Haggard, were a popular genre in the writer's time and were marketed as such by publishers like William Blackwood who anticipated that Conrad would develop into a writer of romances. The reviewers of this period, who were generally positive about Conrad's early works, probably felt he would mature as a writer of patriotic tales and romantic adventure. This is evident, for example, in the sensationalized précis of *Almayer's Folly* which appears in the Dent Collected Edition of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' and Typhoon & Other Stories* (1950, 281) referred to in Chapter One (p. 7). The "dramatic happenings" in the novel would include the sexual liaisons of the protagonists but it would have been outrageous to refer to them in the byline in genteel Edwardian England to market the book. The sub-title of *Almayer's Folly,* "A Story of an Eastern River",

would also have attracted the eye of the reader who would have expected a formulaic novel about adventure and romance set in the exotic East. Part of the reader's expectation would have been met by the description of the luxuriant vegetation which is characteristic of travelogues. However, to refer again to the passage after the lovers' tryst, there is something disquieting about it as it ends:

> [All] around them in a ring of luxuriant vegetation bathed in the warm air charged with strong and harsh perfumes, the intense work of tropical nature went on; plants shooting upward, entwined, interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above - as if struck with sudden horror at the seething mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang. (*AF*, 71)

The luxuriant vegetation would symbolize the fecundity of the lovers' relationship, but the description soon turns to the brutal and ferocious struggle of the elements in nature, providing a disturbing philosophical reflection on life, death and decay. Whilst the description does augment the romantic backdrop to the love-making of Nina and Dain, it is a clue also to Conrad's deeper purpose to subvert the romantic genre. Though the novel, true to its romantic expectations, ends on a happy note for the lovers who go off into the horizon of a new world, it is not before they have engaged in a titanic struggle with the prejudice and bigotry which destroy Almayer not long after they have departed. Just as Conrad subverts the conventional paradigm of the popular romantic genre, the larger vision of the novel is to interrogate and dismantle notions about us and them, especially in relation to race and gender.

Jonathan Culler (1997, 45) has defined the question of agency in cultural discourse as one of how far we can be subjects responsible for our own actions and how far our apparent choices are constrained by forces we do not control. To

modify the latter part of this definition, one might allude to Louis Althusser's concept of "interpellation", which, in terms of Marxist discourse, refers to the way a particular ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects (1971, 162). By this process of interpellation individuals come to identify with an ideology and internalize it as their own identity. An individual is thus always-already a subject. An analogy might be drawn with the way certain religious ideologies are transmitted to individuals at an early age when the new-born baby is hailed or interpellated by the mid-wife or the father as soon as it has taken its first breath. Once the subject has been interpellated with a set of social norms, the failure to abide by them can have traumatic, if not catastrophic consequences. With Mrs. Almayer and Nina, the question of agency in the construction of identity is especially fraught. Mrs. Almayer, a Malay and a Muslim by birth, has been coerced by Lingard into adopting another religious and cultural identity by being sent off to a convent school for four years. In Nina's case the situation is even more complicated. A Eurasian by birth, she spends her formative years at Mrs. Vinck's private school in Singapore, once again at the behest of Lingard, where she is schooled in the Protestant faith and given a Western identity only to come into contact again with her mother's culture and religion as a young woman. Such being the state of affairs, it is inevitable that a clash of cultures would ensue and at the end each of these women will be the agency of her own identity formation. In her book, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993), Judith Butler espouses the notion of "gender performativity" (2) as the rehearsing and reiteration of women's identities in their societies since time immemorial. In their different ways Nina and Mrs. Almayer break the shackles of their gender performativity and construct their own selfhood. It is commonly asserted that Conrad marginalizes women in his fiction. This is neither true of his mature works, nor the early ones, especially the Malayan trilogy. Drawing attention to the subject of Conrad's alleged marginalization of women, Susan Jones writes, "The conventionalized view is highly selective, but it has nevertheless proved

remarkably enduring, and has reduced the value of much of the work that fails to fit its frame of reference" (1999, 5). This reductive view of Conrad has persisted, with some feminist scholars, *à la* Chinua Achebe, accusing the writer of being unremittingly patriarchal and even misogynistic. One such critic is Marianna Torgovnick who vehemently states: "I have read *Heart of Darkness* many times and always been a bit repelled by it" (1990, 145). Her quarrel is with Marlow's portrayal of Kurtz's African mistress: "Why is the woman's sorrow 'wild', her pain 'dumb' [. . .] More - why is the woman the embodiment of Africa? What gives Marlow the right (and why does Conrad not challenge his right?) to make this woman so portentous a symbol?" (155). Peter Firchow contemptuously dismisses Torgovnick's charges as "absurd", pointing out that in the early fiction "nonwhite (or mixed) women [are] invariably shown to be morally superior (in both courage and fidelity, as well as intelligence) to their real or potential white lovers" (2000, 125).

If the eponymous anti-hero of *Almayer's Folly* is not the real centre of interest in the novel, then it stands to reason that Mrs. Almayer and Nina constitute the magnetic force which determines the actions taken by the other notable characters. Some critics who were otherwise negative or lukewarm in their general reception of *Almayer's Folly* felt that the book was redeemed by the presence of the women. An anonymous reviewer in *Literary World* of Boston (18 May 1895), for example, described the novel as a "rather dull and dreary story", but one in which the scenes between Mrs. Almayer and her daughter show "remarkable insight into the point of view of the Eastern woman" (Carabine 1992, 243).

In treating his wife as a marketable commodity which could be dispensed with at will, Almayer does not understand Mrs. Almayer, or the workings of her "primitive" mind, including her potential for cunning and intrigue. After he marries her, we are told that he begins concocting plans for getting rid of the pretty Malay girl in a more or less distant future (*AF*, 23). Characteristically for Almayer it is a

vague plan which he will implement sometime in the hazy future, the future being the locus of his cherished dreams. His wife, however, retains enough of her conventional teaching to understand that according to "white men's law" she is going to be Almayer's companion and not his slave, and promises to herself to act accordingly (*AF*, 23). Unlike Almayer, she lives in the present and plots and plans in keeping with the exigencies of the moment. Far from being an object of barter, or a slave to her master, she overturns the paradigm of the dominant, white male versus the pliant, passive and submissive exotic female creature. No noble savage, she forms liaisons with cut-throats such as Babalatchi and Lakamba in the interests of her own personal and financial security, even if these relationships are to the detriment of her husband. Not only does Lakamba visit Almayer for official interviews, but he is often seen on moonlit nights rowing his solitary boat furtively towards Almayer's settlement. Such events are duly observed and discussed with cynicism by the Malays (*AF*, 25). By this time Almayer has built his wife a riverside hut where she dwells in perfect seclusion, therefore, the purpose of Lakamba's nocturnal visits can only be the subject of speculation. Against such inimical forces, represented by Mrs. Almayer and his Arab rivals, Almayer struggles desperately with "a feebleness of purpose depriving him of all chance of success" (*AF*, 25). When the battered body of the supposed Dain Maroola is discovered after a stormy night, it is Mrs. Almayer who covers the face and, by her noisy outbursts of grief, lends credence to the belief that it is the body of Dain who is being sought by the Dutch authorities for his gun-running. She also colludes with Dain who bribes her with silver to facilitate his elopement with Nina. When she attempts unsuccessfully to coax her husband to reveal the source of Lingard's putative treasure to Lakamba, under the mistaken notion that her husband knows, she rebounds: "'You know, Kaspar, I am your wife! Your own Christian wife after your own Blanda law!' For she knew that this was the bitterest thing of all; the greatest regret of his life" (*AF*, 40). Mrs. Almayer's status in the novel cannot be marginalized or wished away. After all, it is her shrill voice, "'Kaspar! Makan!'"

calling her somnolent husband to dinner that initiates the novel and establishes her dominance over him.

An important lead afforded by Leonard Orr is that Mrs. Almayer fantasizes about a return to Malay native sovereignty, just as her racist husband believes he is superior to any of the Malays or Arabs on the river (1999, 31). Actually, it would be more to the purpose to compare her dreams about national identity with her husband's dream of returning a wealthy man to his people in Amsterdam, to join the "boys' club", or become "one of us" as it were. Whilst it is valid to insist that they both share strong emotions about racial and national identities, Mrs. Almayer's traumatic past, and Lingard's benevolent but misguided intrusion into her life and that of her people must be taken into account in an assessment of her motives. It is strange that Orr should refer to Mrs. Almayer as "the architect behind the fatal relationship of Nina and Dain" (33). If anything, their relationship is antithetical to the life-in-death, moribund existence of Mr. and Mrs. Almayer and far from "fatal". In the manner of the luxuriant vegetation that climbs "madly and brutally over each other [. . .] towards the life-giving sunshine above" (*AF*, 71), Nina and Dain transcend the corruption and machinations of the world of the Almayers, the Lakambas, and the Babalatchis.

Mrs. Almayer is the catalyst whose impact on the plot of the novel and the destinies of Nina, Dain and Almayer is only matched by the vehemence of her revenge on Almayer and Lingard for what they have done to her life. As the plot of the lovers' elopement begins to gather momentum, Mrs. Almayer dispenses her parting words of advice to her daughter in a scene reminiscent of Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* prior to the departure of his son Laertes, but devoid of the hypocrisy that marks Polonius's homiletic tone. What Mrs. Almayer imparts to Nina are crucial life skills to cope with the demands of a different world with a different culture after she has renounced all claims to her European identity. In an emotionally-charged scene, she first reminds Nina of the time when Lingard, "'the terrible old man'" (*AF*, 150) took Nina away from her; of how she wanted to

look at her face once more but was prevented from doing so by her husband. "'You were his daughter then; you are my daughter now,'" she proclaims to Nina, then forbids her from seeing her father or ever stepping into this courtyard again. Nina tries to oppose her, saying that she will have nothing to do with her hate or revenge and that she will see her father before her departure. When her mother threatens to have her lover arrested if she steps in the direction of Almayer's house, Nina relents. Mrs. Almayer's injunction is final and uncompromising, revealing not only her innermost thoughts about white people, who in her eyes constitute the other, but is also an authoritative affirmation of resistance to the colonizing other and a reversal of the stereotype of the submissive Eastern woman:

> Forget that you ever looked at a white face; forget their words; forget their thoughts. They speak lies. And they think lies because they despise us that are better than they are, but not so strong. Forget their friendship and their contempt; forget their many gods. Girl, why do you want to remember the past when there is a warrior and a chief ready to give many lives - his own life -for one of your smiles? (*AF*, 151)

This is an ironic subversion of Western subjectivity *vis-á-vis* the Oriental, or the other. Recognizing the weakness of her own people in the face of the superior military power of their colonizers, she undermines the arrogance of the racist Westerner (such as Almayer) who would regard himself as superior to her people, or the smug attitude of people (such as Lingard) who regard their monotheistic faith as normative and hence valorized above other faiths. Ania Loomba (1998, 106) claims that in colonial discourse religious difference often became an index of racial, cultural and ethnic differences. Above all, she asserts, in medieval and early modern Europe, Islam functioned as the predominant binary opposite of and threat to Christianity. Mrs. Almayer, who is Malay by birth, is speaking about

Christianity and possibly alluding to the Trinity, or the other denominations of the Christian faith such as Catholicism and Protestanism to which she and her daughter were subjected respectively. Homi Bhabha suggests that the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority (1994, 88). After years of exposure to a convent education and a new religion Mrs. Almayer still wears a crucifix, "her only theological outfit for the stormy road of life" (*AF*, 41). All she has is but a hazy idea of its true meaning and significance. She regards the object as some form of charm, the loss of which would unleash bad Djinns and horrible torments as especial punishment designed by the good Mother Superior (*AF*, 41). Not quite the Catholic Lingard had intended her to become, Mrs. Almayer, as the speaker or site of enunciation, is both double-voiced and split. The strategy of splitting, in terms of Bhabha's postulate, is the production of a space of contradictory and multiple belief, a strategic space of enunciation in which language becomes doubly inscribed and the intellectual system uncertain (1994, 134). Therefore, Mrs. Almayer becomes both the agency of mimicry, who has not quite turned into what her education had intended her to be, as well as the split voice of enunciation that renders her subjectification by evangelical conversion nonsensical. Double-voicing and splitting, combined with the key notions of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence as espoused by postcolonial theorists, mainly Homi Bhabha, are used as strategies of subversion and resistance throughout the novel. This notion will be re-visited at the end of this chapter.

Mrs. Almayer's advice to her daughter is tempered with reality. The world that Nina will go to will not be a romantic one, free of tension, strife, jealousy or violence. Recognizing the role that is in store for Dain as the future leader of his people, she admonishes: "'Do not let him look too long in your eyes, nor lay his head on your knees without reminding him that men should fight before they rest. And if he lingers, give him a kriss yourself and bid him go, as the wife of a mighty prince should do when the enemies are near'" (*AF*, 153). Here one recalls that

Mrs. Almayer is the daughter of fearless pirates, who as a girl fought with Lingard's men before she was orphaned by him. She reminds her daughter that she is marrying a prince who will have other women, therefore she should forget her European values and accept polygamy because this will be part of her new identity: "'I tell you that, because you are half-white, and may forget that he is a great chief, and that such things must be'" (*AF*, 153). And finally, what Leonard Orr has referred to as "blood-thirsty advice" (1999, 33), she tells Nina to "'show no mercy'" to that woman who may come to usurp her affection for Dain completely. With these words of wisdom for survival in a hostile world, she sees Nina off. Any notions that the reader might have entertained that this story of an "Eastern River" is about an idyllic, mythic world where boy meets girl and they live happily ever after must surely be dispelled after these ominous words.

Ruth Nadelhaft, in a feminist reading of Conrad, argues that Nina and Mrs. Almayer achieve their closeness and their separate maturity through their resistance to white men (1991, 25). Nadelhaft's study has not gone down too well with at least one Conradian, namely John Stape. In *The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad* (1996), Stape, who edits the volume, includes her on his list of authors for "further reading" but in his synopsis describes her work as, "A reductively partisan feminist study unconvincing in its revisionist programme" (252). This is not surprising as Nadelhaft, in her introduction, takes a coterie of male critics to task for their "conjunction of interests" which led to a "complex and perhaps inevitable intersections of misreadings" (1991, 4). Such a territorial appropriation by male critics has resulted in a tacit critical agreement about the meaning and place of women and the feminine in Conrad's life and work. A postcolonial assessment of the role of women in his writing shows that they embody values, ideas and emotions central to his oeuvre.

Both mother and daughter in *Almayer's Folly* challenge the dominant male protagonist and his misconceived Western superiority and culture. When Nina returns to her estranged father and mother from the Protestant school in

Singapore where she was slighted because of her race, she aligns herself with her own people, seeing very little difference between the culture of her father and mother:

> Nina saw only the same manifestations of love and hate and of sordid greed chasing the uncertain dollar in all its multifarious and vanishing shapes. To her resolute nature, however, after all these years, the savage and uncompromising sincerity of purpose shown by her Malay kinsmen seemed at least preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite disguises, to the virtuous pretences of such white people as she had had the misfortune to come into contact with. (*AF*, 43)

From the first description of Nina, we are presented with the figure of a woman who is not only cast as a statuesque amazon, but also as one with an intelligence to match, and with an individuality all her own. Admittedly there is a fair degree of racial stereotyping in the narratorial voice, but overall what emerges is a portrait of a woman who is unique. It is significant that the only characteristic she seemingly inherits from her father is a "correct profile" (*AF*, 16), whilst the rest of her physiognomy is modified by features inherited from her maternal ancestors, the Sulu pirates. A "vague suggestion of ferocity" (*AF*,17) in her features is a reminder of her mother's animation, and is a clue to her later claim to independence and strength of character. Stereotypically, she has the dark and perfect eyes with their tender softness common to Malay women, but what sets her apart from the other women of her race is a "gleam of superior intelligence" (*AF*, 17). In setting up Malay womanhood as a foil to Nina's uniqueness, the writer is guilty of stereotyping Malay women as not being generally intelligent, but this is hardly a point in this context because the superior intelligence Nina has inherited could very well have come from her sharp-witted mother.

Her mental acuity is in evidence almost immediately after the description of her

striking beauty. When Almayer asks her if she heard a boat go by about half an hour ago, she slowly replies that she has heard nothing when it plain that she has sensed Dain Maroola's arrival. Almayer knows intuitively that Dain has arrived and immediately his mind conjures up images of wealth. To Nina he confides, "'It is bad to have to trust a Malay [. . .] but I must own that this Dain is a perfect gentleman - a perfect gentleman'" (*AF*, 18). Almayer's racist assumptions which are based on the stereotype and ingrained to the extent that his words are perfunctory, are ironically layered. If Dain is a perfect gentleman, Nina needs no convincing of this fact; it is merely an approbation of what she herself would come to feel about her future lover and the value she would place on him above other suitors. If Dain is the exception to the other Malays as far as trusting them goes, then Almayer will come to rue his high esteem of this man. In his flight of fantasy occasioned by Dain's arrival, Almayer tells his daughter: "'We shall live a - a glorious life. You shall see'" (*AF*, 18). His obsession with wealth and a future with his daughter in Europe makes him obtuse to all other realities, even the possibility of Nina's secret desires. As he falls into his gin-induced sleep, Almayer is "oblivious alike of his hopes, his misfortunes, his friends and his enemies; and the daughter stood motionless, at each flash of lightning eagerly scanning the broad river with a steady and anxious gaze" (*AF*, 20). Thus begins the amorous intrigue between Nina and Dain, a relationship that leads ultimately to the sad dénouement in which father and daughter part forever after the emotionally explosive climax of the novel.

Andrea White, whilst acknowledging Nina's "aggressiveness" in Conrad's portraiture of her, contends that such portrayals construct stereotypes of their own and that the writer creates few, if any, living women (1993, 193). The textual presentation of Nina constitutes a refutation of this premise. Ian Watt has commented that *Almayer's Folly* subverts another convention of romance, namely, that the woman is a sublimely passive creature of Victorian convention (1980, 46). In support of his argument, Watt cites the passage which describes the lovers

after their assignation:

> She drew back her head and fastened her eyes on his in one of those long looks that are a woman's most terrible weapon; a look that is more stirring than the closest touch, and more dangerous than the thrust of a dagger, because it also whips the soul out of the body, but leaves the body alive and helpless, [. . .] a look that enwraps the whole body, and that penetrates into the innermost recesses of the being, bringing terrible defeat in the delirious uplifting of accomplished conquest. (*AF*, 171)

Referring to the same passage, Linda Dryden argues that Nina momentarily becomes the embodiment of the threat to male potency posed by female sexuality (2000, 69). However, in juxtaposing Nina with some of the snake-like female characters in Rider Haggard's fiction, Dryden replicates the stereotypical response to female sexuality in nineteenth-century romance of empire in which femininity was viewed as erotic, beguiling and emasculating. What is at play here is the reversal of the role of the gaze or scopic desire, an important colonial construct in objectifying and interpellating the colonial subject in a way that fixes its identity in relation to the surveyor. Ashcroft et al. maintain that the imperial gaze defines the identity of the subject, objectifies it within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalterneity and powerlessness (1998, 226). To shift the notion of the gaze from its imperial paradigm of colonizer/colonized to the male/female encounter, one might say that Nina's centrality in the love relationship undermines the convention of the dominant male *vis-à-vis* the submissive, compliant female of romance tales. This is instanced in a passage that appears long before the one cited by Watt and Dryden. In the section describing the lovers in the aftermath of their first tryst, Dain says, "'We must part now'" (*AF*, 71). Nina's subsequent actions confirm her dominant sexual role:

> Nina leaned over, and with a proud and happy smile took Dain's face between her hands, looking into his eyes with a fond yet questioning gaze [. . .] She believed that he, the descendant of many Rajahs, the son of a great chief, the master of life and death, knew the sunshine of life only in her presence [. . .] She threw her arms around Dain's neck and pressed her lips to his in a long and burning kiss. (*AF*, 72)

In an inversion of the clichéd romantic male/female encounter in which the tall, dark, handsome male kisses the female and leaves her breathless and in a state of ecstasy, it is Nina, the racially and culturally hybrid female who gazes into her lover's face, throws her arms around his neck and kisses him fervently, leaving him surprised and apprehensive at the storm of emotion she has stirred in him. Nina pushes away her canoe, whilst he keeps his eyes closed long after she has gone. The voyeuristic gaze of the male has been appropriated by the dominant (female) partner in the relationship.

By no stretch of the imagination can Nina be considered a stereotypical woman as suggested by Andrea White. Her defiant attitude is much in evidence in the scene where two Dutch officers visit Almayer with the intention of finding out the whereabouts of Dain Maroola, a fugitive from the Dutch authorities. Having failed to extract any information from the inebriated Almayer, the lieutenant turns to Nina and asks her to persuade her father to assist them, pointing out that Dain has been responsible for the death of two white men. Nina's exclamation, "'Two only!'" (*AF*, 140), discomfits the officer who stammers, "'Why! Why! You - .'" Nina then becomes confrontational: "'Then I would get him for you if I had to seek him in a burning fire [. . .] I hate the sight of your white faces. I hate the sound of your gentle voices. That is the way you speak to women, dropping sweet words before any pretty face. I have heard your voices before. I hoped to live here without seeing any other white face but this [gesturing to Almayer]" (*AF*, 140-141).

Nina's re-appearance in the world of Almayer and his wife is the moment which

precipitates the dialectic of racial, cultural and gender dynamics in the novel. As long as Dain Maroola is useful to Almayer in the fulfilment of his dreams of wealth, he is trusted by Almayer; however, when he realizes that his daughter is the object of the Malay's affection, his latent but irrational racism surfaces. There is no rational basis for this racism because he himself has contracted a marriage of convenience with a Malay woman and now he objects to Dain even though his daughter is of mixed parentage. In the highly-wrought dramatic climax between father and daughter, which includes the presence of Dain who is the catalyst in this cauldron of emotions, Almayer's response to the Malay is a mixture of racism, stereotype and realism. As a father he sees it as his duty to protect his daughter's interests. He therefore warns her that in the world of Dain she will become no more than one of his new playthings, and later a slave. There might be a degree of truth in this since Almayer has lived in the tropics a long time and is acquainted with the culture of Malays and Arabs. But Dain insists, "'this is a white man's lie'", and turning to Nina he declares: "'I have delivered my soul into your hands for ever; I breathe with your breath, I see with your eyes, I think with your mind, and I take you in my heart for ever'" (*AF*, 178). It would be easy to dismiss such protestations as sheer rhetoric coming from an impassioned young man in the first flush of romance. It would be even cynical to say that after a time he would turn his attention to other women, as Mrs. Almayer has already warned her daughter. But there is no logical basis for such an assumption which is based on a stereotype. Dain could just become the exception to the cultural lifestyle of some Muslim men such as Reshid, Abdulla's nephew, who already has several Malay women but wishes to have Nina amongst his latest collection, "'the first of the four allowed by the Prophet'" (*AF*, 45). After Dain has challenged this stereotyping as a white man's lie, Almayer accuses him of being a "thief", with the implication that Dain has dishonourably taken Nina without the formalities of a betrothal. Again Dain rebuts Almayer with the response, "'and the dowry I have given to the woman you call your wife'" (*AF*, 178). Having all but exhausted his armoury of objections

to Nina's choice of a husband, Almayer resorts to the ultimate racist jibe: "'What made you give yourself up to that savage? For he is a savage'" (*AF*, 178). Almayer's vehemence at this point is equalled by Hermann's disgust at Captain Falk when he attempts to exclude him from the community of civilized society in an act of othering.

Predictably, Nina's response to this crude jibe is sharp: "'You call him a savage! What do you call my mother, your wife?'" (*AF*, 179). The realization that his daughter is also a part of the "savage" nature of his wife is more than Almayer can bear so he commands his daughter, using his male, patriarchal authority, to take her eyes off his face. Marianna Torgovnick has argued persuasively that the term "savage", along with terms such as "pre-Columbian", "tribal", "third world", "exotic", "non-Western", and "Other", all take the "West as norm and define the rest as inferior, different, deviant, subordinate and subordinatable [sic]"(1990, 21). Almayer, through the medium of the narrative voice, has always viewed his wife as the other, and now that Nina has touched a raw nerve he cannot countenance the paradox of his racist self. Again, Torgovnick reminds us that the term "savage" is implicated in the psyche of modern man, and the sense of the primitive impinges on our sense of ourselves: "We conceive of ourselves as at a crossroads between the civilized and the savage; we are formed by our conceptions of both those terms, conceived dialectically" (17). Nina's comment about her father's attitude to her mother effectively silences Almayer who realizes that he is caught up at the crossroads of the dialectic of "savage" and "civilized": that Nina herself is a hybrid, miscegenated off-spring as a result of his own liaison with a "savage" woman. Speaking of both Almayer and Willems (*An Outcast of the Islands*), Ruth Nadelhaft contends that consciousness comes as a threat to the white man and they [sic] reject it: "Almayer's great desire is forgetfulness, even at the cost of losing both his daughter and himself. Both Almayer and Willems [. . .] reject the kind of self-knowledge that passionate apprehension of a woman involves. They attribute it to savagery and contrast this savagery with what they

call Europeanism" (1986, 158). Whilst Almayer is temporarily silenced, Nina is not and she continues speaking with fervour as she outlines the lineaments of the new identity she is about to assume:

> And I mean to live. I mean to follow him. I have been rejected with scorn by the white people, and now I am a Malay! He took me in his arms, he laid his life at my feet. He is brave; he will be powerful, and I hold his bravery and his strength in my hand and I shall make him great. His name shall be remembered long after both our bodies are laid in the dust. I love you no less than I did before, but I shall never leave, for without him I cannot live. (*AF*, 180)

Nina has come to terms with herself and her ambitions, a fact not lost on her father who makes the ironic rejoinder: "'You want him as a tool for some incomprehensible ambition of yours'" (*AF*, 180), forgetting that he himself once desired to use Dain as a tool to help him realize his dreams. Almayer admits as such to Nina:"'[W]hen that man came I also saw the blue and the sunshine of the sky. A thunderbolt has fallen from that sky, and suddenly all is still and dark around me for ever'" (*AF*, 191). In this highly emotional scene, father and daughter part for ever, with Almayer obstinately unforgiving till the end. The narrative voice informs us that his "heart yearned for her. What if he should say that his love for her was greater than . . ." (*AF*, 192). The elliptical ending of the paragraph testifies to the final defeat of Almayer by the forces of racism, prejudice and bigotry. After Nina's departure, to Ali's great dismay, Almayer falls on his hands and knees and erases her footprints with small heaps of sand leaving behind him a line of miniature graves. Nina's departure heralds a new life for her but at the same time it presages the tragic end of Almayer's dream of his own little empire. Significantly, he will burn down "Almayer's Folly", then take to opium to further insulate himself from reality, and finally, he will keep the company of Jack,

the monkey, to lead him about. Allan Simmons has pithily remarked that for a man who interprets his cultural difference from the Sambir natives as cultural superiority, the company of the monkey represents a descent down the Darwinian ladder (1997, 170).

Contrary to the vast body of earlier readings of *Almayer's Folly* which downplayed the role of the women in it, as well as its gender and racial politics, recent postcolonial interventions have restored to Conrad's first novel a sense of balance that recalls some of the positive responses to the novel on its publication (of course there were also some negative and jaundiced views as well, such as: "Almayer is a Dutchman who marries a Malay woman, and the central conception is the relapse of their daughter from the colonial version of civilization to a barbaric life" [Carabine 1992, 243]). One review, which appeared in a New York publication, *The Bookman*, discerned in Nina "the ineradicable instincts of the Malay mother, which, under favouring circumstances, asserted their racial strength and encompassed the overthrow of the white man" (Carabine 1992, 240). The same reviewer also remarks that Nina is a fine illustration of a Malay in transition. As a character in transition, Nina , in microcosm, represents proleptically the changing face of the Malay world inhabited by the Europeans, Malays, Arabs and several tribes of the Archipelago. To this effect, Christopher Gogwilt has argued that Nina's "affair" with Dain acquires a political edge through the dilemma of her mixed Malay and European heritage (1995, 82). Her split racial heritage articulates and prefigures the historical process of decolonization as well as the problematic of racial and national identity on the Malay Archipelago in the twentieth century.

III.

What provides the impetus for this chapter is the question of how people of different races and cultures interact in the spaces of the other/Other and construct

their identities. As an alternative to the notion of an originary identity, forever fixed in the antagonistic paradigm of "us" and "them", or alterity, Homi Bhabha offers the possibility of a "third space" for the enunciation of subjectivity: "And one last time, there is a return to the performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration" (1994, 9). Having first surveyed the critical climate in which *Almayer's Folly* was traditionally evaluated, this chapter has problematized the notions of race, culture, and gender as determinants of subjectivity and has attempted to show that identity, as Stuart Hall has postulated, is never a stable or static construct. As markers of otherness, race, culture and gender are vexed constructions which defy convenient stereotyping. Kaspar Almayer, modelled on a real-life Eurasian named William Charles Olmeijer whom Conrad came across in Sambir (Baines 1959, 89), is not the confident, resourceful, strong-willed white colonial stereotype one expects to find in the tropics. Whilst he might be Tom Lingard's protégé placed as his representative in an alien environment, he lacks the drive and initiative of his surrogate father to master the hostile conditions of his existence. The name of the house he has built is not only emblematic of the failure of his dreams, but also an echo of his racial pride which eventually destroys him. Cedric Watts (1984, 52) testifies to Almayer's desire for an originary identity:

> A rather neglected aspect of *Almayer's Folly* (and one which, again, provides a clear answer to critics who unjustly accuse Conrad of 'racism') is that the tragedy of Almayer is one generated largely by his own racial prejudice. He regards his beloved daughter's elopement with the olive-skinned prince as both a personal and a racial betrayal.

Nina and Mrs. Almayer, on the other hand, far from occupying a marginalized space in the novel, transcend their conditions of existence circumscribed by their gendered roles in society. They engage with the male characters in a contestation

for power on an equal footing and emerge victorious.

Ruth Nadelhaft (1991, 13) has affirmed that the women in Conrad's early fiction occupy critical space. Nina and Mrs. Almayer appropriate critical space in the text from which they talk back not only to Almayer, the representative of colonial, male hegemony, but to empire itself. Their triumph serves to diminish Almayer's presence as well as his dreams. Contrary to what Robert Hampson has said about Nina, that in choosing to betray one group for another she betrays a part of herself (1992, 31), Nina has nothing to betray. Her subjectivity is enriched by the outcome of her negotiation of her old self with the contingencies of a changing universe. An inhabitant of two worlds, she makes a conscious choice to create a third world for herself and her future. Juliet McLauchlan, writing at a time when Conrad's women characters were marginalized by a powerful male lobby, contends: "Nina Almayer, a half-caste, torn between her parents with totally opposite longings for her future, becomes a powerful metaphor for any young person forced to assert the right to lead an independent life" (1990[1979], 87). Nina does not simply enact her mother's dream of an originary Malay identity as suggested by Heliéna Krenn (1990, 40), but by her own agency she chooses to become the wife of a future chief and accept the consequences. The architect of her own destiny, she knows it will be far from idyllic but certainly life-giving, not sterile like the world of her father. Subjected to the will of Dain, she will not lose her own will-to-power in a Nietzschean sense. In fairness to Robert Hampson, he did revise his position on Nina a few years later at a conference commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Almayer's Folly*, this time, as he puts it, appealing to "the language of Homi Bhabha" (1998, 85). Moving from his earlier stance that she finally settles on a particular originary identity, Hampson proposes that what we actually see in the course of the narrative is Nina's continuous performance of identity through a constant negotiation of her own hybridity. Having said this, Hampson does not elaborate on the concept of hybridity.

Robert Young has submitted that there is no single or correct concept of hybridity as a theoretical construct (1995, 27). In colonial discourse it was imbricated in various ways with racism, mongrelization, and miscegenation. Adapting Bakhtin's paradigm of the hybrid in language, Young explicates that the term has a doubleness that both brings together, but maintains separation (22). Hence, the crucial effect of hybridization, which overlaps with double-voicing as well as splitting, is to unmask the Other. It is this sense in which the notion of hybridity is taken up and developed by Homi Bhabha as a site of ambivalence. Hybridity, in Bhabha's formulation, "unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power [. . .] in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (1994, 112). The strategies of doubling and splitting, combined with the notions of hybridity and ambivalence, a word that is synonymous with Bhabha, are constantly used to undermine subject positions in the novel. Mrs. Almayer's taunt to her husband that she is his Christian wife after his own "'Blanda law'" (*AF*, 40), is one of many instances of double-voicing and splitting. Having married Almayer under Dutch law, she uses the law to claim her privileges as his wife, at the same time showing contempt for that law which was used expediently by Almayer in a marriage that has no meaning. Nina's hybridity as a miscegenated product of that marriage is strongly accentuated by the various guises she assumes. At first she does not wear a veil, an important accoutrement of her Islamic identity, but after she is reprimanded by her mother she instinctively assumes the veil in the company of Dain. She is admired for her beauty by Arabs and Malays alike, but despised for her Western ways. Her hybridity becomes a tool of resistance to her father's narcissistic identity as a white man first and foremost.

It is one of the supreme ironies of the story that Almayer does not see the fact of hybridity all around him. Allan Simmons draws attention to the many languages spoken in the novel (1997, 164-165). The hybridity of languages is foregrounded in the climactic scene when English, Dutch and Malay are spoken by the

principals. The hybrid nature of the text is marked by two important details. It opens with Mrs. Almayer summoning her husband to dinner in the Malay language:"'Kaspar! Makan'". It ends with Almayer lying dead "under the gaze of indifferent eyes" (*AF*, 208), with Abdulla looking down sadly "at this Infidel he had fought so long" (*AF*, 208). As he leaves, he clicks his beads and breathes out in the "name of Allah! The Merciful! The Compassionate!", on which the novel ends, bringing to a close the brief history of Almayer, framed between two utterances which are foreign to his European identity, yet a part of his existence which he failed to recognize both in himself, and most tragically, in his daughter. Abdulla's subversive gesture counterpoints the rhetorical question posed by Homi Bhabha in his discussion on double-voicing and splitting: "If the word of the master is already appropriated and the word of the slave is undecidable, where does the truth of colonial nonsense lie?" (1994, 134).

In an unsigned negative review of *Almayer's Folly* in *Nation* (U.S.A), dated 17 October 1895, the writer caustically avows: "Borneo is a fine field for the study of monkeys, not men" (Sherry 1973, 60). Apart from revealing the kind of myopia that characterized some early readers of Conrad's first novel, the comment is indicative of the fact that many critics were not prepared for the subject matter broached by the author in an alien setting such as Malaysia. Lloyd Fernando, in an essay first penned in 1976, bears witness to the cataclysmic effect of the colonial encounters of his Eastern expatriates: "[The] encounter equally undermines the bedrock of conviction in the beliefs and values of one's own group, absorbed over a lifetime. An entire civilization begins to tremble at the foundations [. . .] and conventions of race and customs [are] seen to possess a frightening arbitrariness" (1990[1976], 66). That Conrad was ahead of his time in tackling the issues of race, gender and alterity which this chapter has dramatized, is a measure of his insight into the contentious nature of subjectivity in the contact zones of empire, and this gives his early writing its postcolonial edge.

* * *

CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSGRESSING BOUNDARIES: *AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS*

> Those two specimens [Almayer and Willems] of the superior race glared at each other savagely for a minute, then turned away their heads at the same moment as if by previous arrangement, and both got up. (*OI*, 63)

> "I did not know there was something in me she could get hold of. She, a savage, I, a civilized European, and clever! She that knew no more than a wild animal!" (*OI*, 269)

> Conrad was enjoying the reverse image of Christian moralizers. He had no ax to grind for either the white or the brown race, in either *Almayer's Folly* or in *An Outcast of the Islands*. (Eloise Knapp Hay 1981[1963], 87)

I.

Pursuant to the theme of identity construction within the intercultural/interracial zones of empire, which was the focus of the previous chapter, this chapter homes in on the overwhelming question of how the principal characters as well as some minor ones in *An Outcast of the Islands* perceive alterity even in intimate relationships that require them to transgress societal norms imposed on their behaviour. The rich intertextual matrix of the first two novels affords Conrad the opportunity to anatomize attitudes and relationships between men and women across racial and cultural barriers. Themed "Transgressing Boundaries", Chapter Four extends the dialectic of race, identity and gender to the writer's second novel and explores subjectivity in situations where people of different races and cultures interface with fixed notions of the other/Other, almost invariably in binary terms of

superiority and inferiority. The guiding question in this chapter is to what extent men and women who transgress social and moral taboos are prepared to negotiate, construct and perform their own identities in the context of conflictual cultural mores. The Aïssa/Willems relationship, which forms the crux of the novel, serves to interrogate not only the attitude of the dominant male from a putatively superior civilization *vis-á-vis* the submissive native love interest, but also the critical investment of a predominantly male-orientated academic discourse which helped shape reader responses to the "savage", feminine other/Other.

Albert Guerard (1958, 68) has noted that Conrad's first two novels, and his next-to-last completed one, *The Rescue* (begun in 1896), record in reverse chronological order the history of Tom Lingard's intervention in Malayan affairs and the ruin of his dreams of benevolent despotism and untold wealth. *An Outcast of the Islands*, the novel published after *Almayer's Folly*, goes back to the time when Nina Almayer is a child who, according to her father, "does not care for her mother" and who is "[his] very image!" (*OI,* 193). In this novel Almayer is involved in a fierce and treacherous rivalry with Peter Willems for the affection of their surrogate father, Tom Lingard. Lingard already conceives a great future for Nina and her father, a pipe-dream that is symbolized in the four-storey house of cards which he builds at the child's prodding, but which collapses at her slight breath (*OI,* 195-196).

As a point of critical articulation for *An Outcast of the Islands* it would be appropriate, if not illuminating, to consider briefly the views of Albert Guerard, whose study *Conrad the Novelist* (1958), is generally cited as a benchmark for a succession of scholarly work on the writer. In Guerard's estimate the first third of the novel shows some attention to detail while the last 75 000 words, which were written in about ten weeks, are "intolerably diffuse and suggest that the writer might be well on his way to becoming a popular, and mediocre, novelist" (78). He identifies Willems as the centre of interest who becomes enthralled by the girl Aïssa, and "is soon wearing a sarong" (79)! In Guerard's opinion, the novel should

have ended , "as the excellent motion picture does" (79) at the point where Lingard, recognizing Willems's horror of native life and the girl, condemns him to live for the rest of the days with her. Then, comments Guerard, a confused and irrelevant fifth part of the novel brings Mrs. Willems onto the scene, and "in the ensuing squabble, Willems is shot by Aïssa" (80). The only area of interest Guerard perceives is the ambiguous nature of the protagonist's sexual passion which is strong enough to conquer racial pride but ends in sexual failure (80). Apart from this observation, Guerard's critique of this early novel hardly rises above the hauteur of the popular journalistic review. If there is any merit at all in the novel then in his judgement it lies in the prefigurations of Lord Jim and Marlow in the persons of Willems and Lingard respectively.

That Jocelyn Baines's account of *An Outcast of the Islands* should resemble Guerard's in several respects is hardly surprising, given the latter's considerable influence on Conradian studies. According to Baines the subject of *An Outcast of the Islands* "is the enslavement and eventual destruction of a white man [. . .] by his passion for a Malay woman" (1959, 161). He regards the novel as being similar to the first one, except that it is twice as long "and without any justification for being so" (161). It must be remarked that both Guerard and Baines seem to grasp at the sentence in the Author's Note where Conrad confessed that the story itself was never very near his heart (Author's Note, Dent Collected Edition, 1949, ix). What is significant about the pronouncements of Baines and Guerard is that in both accounts the figure of Aïssa is severely marginalized to the point where her name hardly warrants much attention. However, Baines does concede that when the novel was published in March1896, the "critics were on the whole complimentary" (165), although they did not receive it quite as well as they did *Almayer's Folly*.

Albert Guerard's critical endowment, coupled with the prevailing mode of close reading enshrined in the precepts of the New Criticism, is evident for at least the next two decades. The critical paradigm inaugurated by Guerard and Baines was

firmly established in the next decade by scholars such as Frederick Karl, Leo Gurko, Avrom Fleishman, John Palmer and David Schwarz. Most of the critics after Guerard continue the discourse on *An Outcast of the Islands* in terms of the tropes of culture versus nature, with the focus on Willems who is persistently viewed as the hapless victim of a corrupting passion. His paramour, Aïssa, is usually associated with his fall from grace and viewed as the agent of his moral and physical destruction. A bird's eye view of critical opinion on the novel is necessary to make the point that criticism of *An Outcast of the Islands*, especially in its approach to Aïssa, had a particularly male-dominated investment which entrenched itself for over two decades in Conradian studies and left traces which are evident up to the end of the twentieth century.

Frederick Karl views the novel as "exotic, full of jungle scenes [with] semi-civilized natives, and violent emotions" (1960, 92). Leo Gurko, echoing Guerard, pronounces: "The corrupt and corrupting jungle becomes the perfect ecological setting for Willems's fall" (1979[1962], 59). Pursuing this theme of corruption, Gurko says, "The novel being a study of degradation, and particularly sexual degradation, we see nature chiefly in her fecundity, her teeming regeneration and decomposition" (61). Implicit in this allusion to sexual degradation is the figure of Aïssa who emblematizes the fecundity of the surrounding jungle. Even in the manner of Willems's death, the account given by Gurko, as well as others, is reminiscent of Guerard who refers derisively to a "squabble", after which "Willems is shot by Aïssa" (1958, 80). Gurko's rendering of events misrepresents, if not falsifies the text: "By the time he dies at Aïssa's hands he has become almost as much as the creature of the Malayan forest [. . .] as a victim of the bullet which she fires at him with such unexpected accuracy" (62). This version of Willems's death has been replicated by various critics, including Ian Watt who says, "When Lingard scornfully refuses his appeals for help, Willems's situation becomes impossible, and Aïssa finally shoots him" (1980; 73). This dramatic and foreshortened account of events is refuted by the evidence of the text. Firstly,

Willems is in no danger from Aïssa who has ordered him to leave the island with his wife and child. She only fires the revolver because Willems has made up his mind to wrest it from her, thinking that she has not cocked it and that she would miss, judging from the way she is holding the firearm. The testimony provided by the text is clear: "'Willems pulled himself together for a struggle. He dared not go unarmed [. . .] He bent his knees slightly, throwing his body forward, and took off with a long bound for a tearing rush'" (*OI*, 360). Secondly, to speak of her "unexpected accuracy" as Leo Gurko does, belies the fact that like Mrs. Almayer in *Almayer's Folly*, Aïssa is the descendant of a tribe of pirates and she is no stranger to armed conflict as she so eloquently points out to Lingard when the two confront each other later in the novel (*OI*, 245-246). Her physical courage is manifest when she saves Willems's life by wrestling the lethal kris from her blind father Omar when he attempts to murder Willems in the night. Therefore, for critics to dismiss this climactic scene in such a perfunctory manner by attributing Willems's death to Aïssa, is to portray Willems as a tragic victim (which he is not, despite what Stephen K. Land says [1984, 1-3]) and Aïssa as his avenging nemesis.

Avrom Fleishman, who acknowledges Eloise Knapp Hay's 1963 work as the only book-length study of Conrad's political thought (Fleishman 1967, ix), a text I shall refer to presently, rehearses the view of Willems's destruction "by his passion for Aïssa" (83). Fleishman, like his predecessors, also short-circuits the novel in his thumbnail sketch of it: "In the romantic plot of the novel, Omar's daughter, Aïssa, is used by Babalatchi as the temptation for which Willems betrays his boss, Lingard" (83). To insist, Aïssa meets her lover long before Babalatchi comes into the picture. Furthermore, she is not part of Willems's ambitions to betray his benefactor Lingard. Willems, whose actions are always based on self-interest, is really a pathetic scoundrel, a judgement which has been studiously avoided by those critics who prefer to view him as a victim of Aïssa's enslavement and the corrupting Malaysian jungle. My assessment of Willems is

in agreement with what the reviewer James Payn wrote in the *Illustrated London News* of 4 April 1896: "[N]ever did so mean a skunk figure as the hero of a novel" (Sherry 1973, 67). It must be recorded also that it is Almayer who teaches his child Nina to call Willems a "pig", after which the child repeats, "Pig! Pig! Pig!" (*OI*, 94). Although it is a bit rich of Almayer to judge Willems so severely in the light of his own villainy in the novel, it is closer to the mark considering Willems's performance of his own identity in the novel. John Palmer (1968, 56) regards *An Outcast of the Islands* as a distinct advance of *Almayer's Folly* in terms of symbolic imagery, moral dimensions, structure and point of view. However, this observation does not preclude him from the misleading oversimplification: "[. . .] Lingard abandons his revolver to choke and strike Willems, and Aïssa uses it to kill him [. . .]" (58); nor does it prevent him from lapsing into a stereotypical gesture such as, "It is important to see here that Aïssa must not be taken as a representative of sexual feeling or 'love' *per se*, but rather as a destructive and regressive passion" (61). One is prompted to ask, "Destructive to whom?". The question is rhetorical. Like the critics before him, Palmer obviously regards Aïssa's passion as the lodestone which draws Willems to his destruction. If anything, Aïssa's relationship with Willems should have had the opposite effect, as Peter Firchow (2000, 125) asserts: "[M]iscegenatious relationships are close to the centre of his early fiction, with the nonwhite (or mixed) women invariably shown to be morally superior (in both courage and fidelity, as well as intelligence) to their real or potential white lovers [.]".

What the foregoing critical overview illustrates is that these critics who see Aïssa's passion as destructive to Willems ignore the fact that Willems is already on the road to perdition by his own indiscretions well before he meets Aïssa. The male-centred and male-centring criticism of the 1960s typifies a generation of scholarship on *An Outcast of the Islands*, even up to Robert Hampson's study *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity* (1992). Hampson deploys the notion of betrayal as a trope in the formation of "identity-for-self" and "identity-for-other",

based on the psychoanalytical constructs of R. D. Laing. Tracing the pattern of betrayals in the novel, Hampson states: "Lingard 'kills' Willems by leaving him on the island, and Omar completes his earlier attempt on Willems's life through his daughter" (1992, 62). However, it must be stressed that Hampson was to revise his views somewhat in his later study published in 2000 (to be considered later), even though his focus there is still on Willems.

Eloise Knapp Hay's seminal work, *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad: A Critical Study* (1981[1963]), inaugurates a paradigm shift from the stereotypical, monolithic discourse of nature versus culture and the corrupting influence of the Malayan jungle (and by implication the Malayan people). Hay writes, "The moral conflicts of Europeans escaping to, or thrust upon, 'primitive' peoples had furnished ideas for both [Conrad's] first novels" (1981[1963], 87). That Hay was very much ahead of her time in anticipating the postcolonial enterprise in Conradian criticism is palpable in her ironic deployment of the word "primitive" in its context. In her thinking, the morality of Conrad's two wrecks, Willems and Babalatchi, interested the writer less than the contrast between them. In his scorn for the white man, Babalatchi tests the white man's code against his practice, as well as against the practices of Muslims. Conrad, declares Hay, "was enjoying the reverse image of Christian moralizers"(87). It is a measure of Hay's unique insight that long before Conrad's political thought was to be interrogated under the theoretical guise of postcoloniality, her critique anticipated Conrad's location at the crossroads of modernism and postmodernism.

If authorial intention is responsible to some degree for the critical reception and evaluation of a novel, then Conrad himself may be responsible for perpetuating the idea that Willems is a victim of Aïssa, the savage woman. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska, dated either 29 October or 05 November 1894, Conrad angrily complains that his original title "Two Vagabonds" has to be changed because someone else has "stolen" his title and published a book called "The Vagabonds" (Karl and Davies 1983, 185). In the same letter Conrad outlines the

theme of his untitled work:

> First, the theme is the unrestrained, fierce vanity of an ignorant man who has had some success but neither principles nor any other line of conduct than the satisfaction of his vanity. In addition, he is not faithful to himself. Whence a fall, a sudden descent to physical enslavement by an absolutely untamed woman. I have seen that! (185)

Writing to his publisher Edward Garnett on 24 September 1895, Conrad speaks of the spent passion of his principals: "The senses are done with. Nothing lasts! So with Aïssa. Her passion is burnt out too [. . .] They both long to have a significance in the order of nature or of society" (Karl and Davies 1983, 247). If authorial intentions can sometimes be misleading, and if Barthes' notion of the death of the author has any validity for postmodern criticism (1977, 142-148), then the figure of Aïssa countermands her creator's intention. Long after Willems's death, as Almayer narrates at the end of the novel, Aïssa went mad for a while, then she would disappear and would have to be hunted out. She would usually be found in a grassy glade by the brook: "'Why she preferred that place, I can't imagine! And such a job to get her away from there. Had to drag her away by main force'" (*OI*, 366). The privileged reader knows what Almayer does not know. Aïssa would go to the spot where she and Willems met the first time. This is not the picture of a woman who has lost her passion. That she soon deteriorates into a "doubled-up crone" (*OI*, 366) is evidence of the trauma she experiences which results in her death-in-life state after Willems's demise. She may not languish in the genteel manner of an Ophelia pining for her Hamlet, but her tragedy is no less poignant.

The reception of a text by reviewers is often a barometer of the writer's reputation, as well as a reflection of what is valorized by the literati of the day in terms of critical thought and the attitudes and perceptions of society. A cross-

section of some of the reviews collected by Norman Sherry in *Conrad: The Critical Heritage* (1973) affords a telling insight into the concerns and preoccupations of the late-Victorian reader. That *An Outcast of the Islands* was generally well received by the reading public who saw potential in the writer of *Almayer's Folly* despite the consensus that he was wordy, is borne out by the fact that of the twelve reviews collected by Sherry (signed and unsigned), only three can be regarded as predominantly negative. One of these, an unsigned review, found the book "diffuse", "trivial", "a bore" and "undeniably dull" (1973, 69-70). An early unsigned reviewer in *Daily Chronicle* of 16 March 1896, taking a more balanced view, broaches the subject of Western civilization's contact with the Other and Conrad's treatment of this theme: "It was a favourite speculation of certain eighteenth-century philosophers whether the civilized white man tended to deterioration under the condition of life in tropical climates [. . .] Mr. Conrad does not expressly take a side on this question" (1973, 64). The reviewer, however, goes on to suggest that Conrad represents these influences as playing an important part in Willems's ruin by "exasperating his self-abasement and accentuating his despair" (1973, 64). Contrary to most views which emphasize Willems's enslavement to Aïssa, this reviewer considers both sides of the situation whereby Aïssa is infatuated with "the biggest man she has ever seen", and whose love for him is "worship" (1973, 64).

Of the dozen reviews in Sherry's text, Aïssa is mentioned by name in only four, whereas Willems is mentioned in eight of them. Curiously but not surprisingly, one positive write-up mentions neither of the lovers but Lingard instead, who is described as "the great white trader, a noble character" (Sherry 1973, 67) without the slightest hint of irony. The longest review is by one of the luminaries of British letters, H. G. Wells. Not once in the three-page review does he mention Aïssa by name. When he does refer to her, she is the "savage" woman (1973, 74). Employing a similar currency, an unsigned reviewer for *Spectator*, dated 30 May 1896, refers to her as a "native woman, who is a magnificent embodiment of

savage passion" (1973, 78). Not only is this tendentious representation of Aïssa characteristic of the rest of the reviews, but it also resonates with much of the earlier critiques of the novel as well as Conrad's own words in his letter to Marguerite Poradowska. As the savage, passionate Other, Aïssa not only prefigures the African amazon of *Heart of Darkness* but becomes the nexus in the dialectic of the racial Other in postcolonial Conradian debate.

Marianna Torgovnick, in her study *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (1990, 8), provides a useful, if not highly polemicized thesis on the construction of the savage and the primitive in Western representations:

> Primitives are like children, the tropes say. Primitives are our untamed selves, our id forces - libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous. Primitives are mystics, in tune with nature, part of its harmonies. Primitives are free. Primitives exist at the "lowest cultural levels"; we occupy the "highest" [. . .] The ensemble of these tropes - however miscellaneous and contradictory - forms the basic grammar and vocabulary of what I call primitivist discourse, a discourse fundamental to the Western sense of self and Other.

Despite the generally positive response of reviewers to Conrad's second novel, not everyone at home was well disposed towards its subject matter or its location in the Malay Archipelago. Because some readers viewed the strange people and their far-off countries as "decivilized" (Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly* in the Dent Collected Edition, 1947, vii), Conrad was impelled to defend the setting of his early novels as well as its people whom certain critics regarded as "primitive". In the same Author's Note, penned in 1895, where Conrad speaks of a common bond with the humanity in far-flung lands, he also writes: "I am content to sympathize with common mortals, no matter where they live; in houses or in tents, in the streets under a fog, or in the forests behind the line of dismal mangroves that

fringe the vast solitude of the sea" (viii). However, the mind-set of some critics is hard to change as perceptions about "savages" and "primitives" are indelibly impressed in the Western psyche and, as Torgovnick argues, these representations shape us and our children (1990, 14). It is not surprising, therefore, to come across a review of *An Outcast of the Islands* such as the unsigned one in *Nation* (USA) which castigates the writer for taking his subjects from places far away from the "centres of civilization" (Sherry 1973, 80). Redolent of that "lady" critic (identified as Alice Meynell by Hampson [2000, 112] and Ian Watt [2000, 37]) who denounced his earlier work as "decivilized" (Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly* 1947, vii), the reviewer berates Conrad for writing about Borneo, which makes him "appear a person of little discernment and poor judgement" (1973, 80)! The reviewer adds: "The climate and the vegetation of the East Indies instigated a book; and the society, black and white, of a sort which no reputable person would meet at home, commanded a novel" (1973, 80).

Ironically, in what is intended to be an excoriating critique of Conrad's choice of subject matter, the same reviewer makes an incisive observation that is not only pertinent to *An Outcast of the Islands* and this thesis, but also subversive of inflexible notions about alterities: "The moral of the books [*Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*] seems to be that white Christians can be much worse than black pagans, and generally are, along the Straits of Macassar" (Sherry 1973, 81). This left-handed remark helps to locate Conrad's early texts within the domain of the postcolonial enterprise which seeks to countervail the master narratives of the West where the "others" are represented as primitives, infidels and degenerates. As Homi Bhabha has argued in an early essay, the objective of colonial discourse was "to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (1986, 154).

II.

An Outcast of the Islands, like its predecessor, *Almayer's Folly*, constitutes a neat counterpoint to the central thesis of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), generally regarded as a founding text in postcolonial discourse, which designates a body of knowledge about the Orient in the discursive practices of the West. The result of polarizing the world into categories such as Oriental and Western (or in Conrad's specific context, of the civilized versus the "decivilized") is that the "Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western" (Said 1995[1978], 46). Because this tendency is at the core of Orientalist theory, practice and values, Said reasons that Western representations of the Orient have acquired the status of scientific truth. Williams and Chrisman (1993, 127) maintain that in the processes of identity constitution, more attention is paid to the nature of the Other than to that of the Self: "In this perspective, the identity formation of the West proceeds much more by listing - and denigrating - the characteristics of the Other than by explicitly enumerating those traits which make the West superior, though the negative classification of the non-Western 'them' allows the 'us' category to be silently filled with all the desirable traits which 'they' do not possess".

The opening chapter of *An Outcast of the Islands* presents a nuanced portrait of Willems (whose first name Peter is mentioned towards the end of the novel by his wife) and how he views his world in relation to that of his half-caste wife Joanna and her relatives, the Da Souzas, "those degenerate descendants of Portuguese conquerors" (*OI*, 4). The opening sentence of the novel alludes to some brief aberration in the life of Willems as he "stepped off the straight and narrow path of his peculiar honesty" (*OI*, 3). But this is only a "short episode" we are told, "a thing of no moment [. . .] and to be quickly forgotten" (*OI*, 3). It is towards the end of this short chapter that the narrator is explicit about Willems's indiscretion, but for now, on his thirtieth birthday, he goes home as usual after an

evening of cocktails and billiards, "drunk with the sound of his own voice celebrating his own prosperity" (*OI*, 8). What the reader is presented with initially is an unflattering picture of a man who has made his way to the top, albeit by questionable means, who is patronizingly racist to his half-caste wife and "pale yellow child" and "dark-skinned brother-in-law" (*OI*, 3), although he clothes and feeds them. The reason he dispenses his largesse to his wife's family is that it gives him a sense of importance. The *alter ego* of Kaspar Almayer in *Almayer's Folly*, Willems is a study in power:

> It rounded and completed his existence in a perpetual assurance of unquestionable superiority. He loved to breathe the coarse incense they offered before the shrine of the successful white man; the man that had done them the honour to marry their daughter, sister, cousin; the rising man sure to climb very high; the confidential clerk of Hudig & Co. They were a numerous and an unclean crowd [. . .] They were a half-caste, lazy lot, and he saw them as they were - ragged, lean, unwashed [. . .]. (*OI*, 4)

It is essential at this stage to distinguish between the narratorial and authorial voices, as failure to do so is the reason that various attitudes are ascribed to Conrad himself, as has been the case in the famous, if not notorious Conrad/Achebe/*Heart of Darkness* polemic. To refer again to Jeremy Hawthorn's study of Free Indirect Discourse (FID) in Conrad's work (1990), it is clear that the description of the Da Souza family is a vocalization of Willems's innermost thoughts about himself and his extended family by marriage. Hence, utterances such as "[. . .] those degenerate descendants of Portuguese conquerors; he was their providence; he kept them singing his praises in the midst of their laziness [. . .]" (*OI*, 4), can only be a reflection of how Willems regards Joanna's family, given the general sense of self-importance present in the entire first chapter. Relating specifically to *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, Hawthorn suggests

that FID enables the writer "to move in and out of characters' consciousness with minimal disruption, avoiding the problems of an over-intrusive narrator who seems to be telling the reader things all the time" (1990, 7).

As pointed out in Chapter Three (p. 84), the use of FID also carries the charge of irony which depends upon a contrast between the outlook and point of view of the character and those of the narrator or narrative perspective. When Willems derives his sense of superiority at the expense of observing the uncomplimentary aspects of the Da Souzas, such as their ragged unwashed figures, the privileged narrator, as well as the reader, knows that there will come a time when the unkempt Willems will appear before the haughty Almayer with an "unclean beard", half-starved and "barefooted", in a "soiled and torn" jacket below which he wears a "worn-out and faded sarong", a garment of the native Malay (*OI*, 87-88). For the moment, though, Willems lords it over his wife's family who live "by the grace of his will. This was power. Willems loved it" (*OI*, 5). In short, Willems "believed in his genius and in his knowledge of the world. Others should know of it also; for their own good and for his greater glory" (*OI*, 6).

It must be noted that there was a time when Willems was generally impressed with his future family and his brother-in-law, Leonard (*OI*, 34) though he found that Joanna was "untidy even then" (*OI*, 35). It is in this context that the narrator says of Willems: "Moreover, he prided himself upon having no colour-prejudices and no racial antipathies" (*OI*, 35). However, after his marriage to Joanna and the arrival of his "pale yellow child" (*OI*, 3), the latent racism in Willems begins to surface. As a Dutchman, Willems believes he is superior to the progeny of a Portuguese government official, who, like himself, had "gone native" - an expression used in colonial discourse to denote the action of white men who had transgressed racial boundaries by marrying native women. Andrea White (1993, 24) contends that terms such as "gone native", "gone bush" and "gone fantee" all carry derogatory connotations, indicating that such an action constituted a betrayal that threatened the "civilized" tenets of "superior" cultures (White's emphases).

From Willems's perspective, however, the ignominy attached to marrying into the Da Souza family is deepened by the fact that the progenitor is a Portuguese.

Racist discourse in Conrad is not confined to the polarities of Jew and Gentile, as instanced in "Amy Foster", or whites and "niggers" in *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, but also extends to the perceived notions of difference between Europeans of different nationalities. "Freya of the Seven Isles" (*TLS*, 1947[1912]) for example, enacts the tragic love story of Freya and Jasper, an Englishman who becomes the victim of the rabid xenophobia of the despicable and disgusting Dutch lieutenant, Heemskirk. Willems's preoccupation with the fact that his wife's family members are the descendants of a Portuguese official, is an attempt to define his national superiority over the Portuguese, who, Ronald Hyam claims, were regarded as the lowest in the moral scale of all European nations (1976, 39). Such a view finds a counterpart in the character of Mr. Travers whom we shall encounter in Chapter Five. This racial hierarchy, argues Hyam, stemmed from nineteenth-century British "arrogance and censoriousness" (37) as a result of Britain's contact with non-European peoples, as well as the disparity in power between Britain and the rest of the world. Conrad's juxtaposition of racial attitudes, of "us" and "Others", in his early and middle fiction, constantly interrogates and exposes the contradictions and conflicts at the heart of colonial discourse. The "othering" of people, based on racial antipathy or ethnic difference, leads to the insanity of hate as I shall illustrate in due course.

So much for Willems's sense of superiority as he construes his identity up to the age of about thirty. As the opening chapter of the novel progresses towards its climax, the omniscient narrator, through the device of FID, begins to supplant the putative eminence of the confidential clerk of Hudig & Co. As he walks home to tyrannize over his submissive wife who had "rebelled once - at the beginning" (*OI*, 9), he contemplates his "glorious" (*OI*, 7) life and how he came to that position. We learn about "the more important affairs: the quiet deal in opium; the illegal traffic in gunpowder; the great affair of smuggled firearms" (*OI*, 8). That

Willems has a venal streak and is not averse to corruption such as bribery is also clear:

> That was the way to get on. He disapproved of the elementary dishonesty that dips the hand in the cash-box, but one could evade the laws and push the principles of trade to their furthest consequences. Some call that cheating. Those are the fools, the weak, the contemptible. The wise, the strong, the respected, have no scruples. Where there are scruples there can be no power. On that text he preached often to the young men. (*OI*, 8)

Robert Hampson (1992, 33) has compared Willems's "enlightened self-interest" with Dostoevsky's character, Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. While this is valid up to a point, Hampson's extended corollary between Willems and Raskolnikov is, to my mind, unsustainable and unfair to the latter. Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, and by implication Conrad's Razumov, who is Raskolnikov's *alter ego* in *Under Western Eyes*, are tragic figures even though Raskolnikov will go on to commit a double murder, and Razumov will betray a revolutionary. Willems has not one iota of their nobility. His sense of power, which thrives on the weak and contemptible, is consonant with Nietzsche's exposition of the will-to-power in his treatise *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989[1967], 163): "And, to repeat in conclusion what I said at the beginning: man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will (Nietzsche's emphases)". By the close of the first chapter, which is a crucial index to Willems's construction of his self in relation to others who are either perceived as "degenerates", or "Portuguese", or "weak" and "contemptible", the grounds for Willems's self-importance and putative superiority are neatly undercut by the narrator's subtle allusion to two facts about him. Firstly, he has married his half-caste wife to please Hudig, his employer, who gave him the bungalow in which he lives (at the time he did not know that Hudig

was the father of Joanna), and secondly, despite his scruples to dipping into the cash-box, he has "appropriated temporarily some of Hudig's money" (*OI*, 11). This inglorious descent from the heights of the Nietzschean ideology of the will-to-power to downright thievery marks the end of one phase in his life and the beginning of his dalliance with the beautiful Aïssa after he is ignominiously dismissed by Hudig.

The intensity of the opening chapter and the concision with which Conrad unravels some of the events of Willems's life up to the age of thirty, seem to bear witness to the writer's original intention to keep *An Outcast of the Islands* a short story, as conveyed in a letter to Poradowska: "I want to make this thing very short - let us say twenty to twenty-five pages, like those in the *Revue*. I am calling it 'Two Vagabonds', and I want to describe in broad strokes, without shading or details, two human outcasts such as one finds in the lost corners of the world. A white man and a Malay" (Karl and Davies 1983, 171). The white man, of course, is Willems, but the Malay is not Aïssa, or Omar, her blind father, both of whom are displaced, homeless people, but Babalatchi. Notwithstanding the subsidiary but important position assigned to the character of Babalatchi, the original title gives an added dimension to the thematic structure of the novel. Babalatchi, once a follower of the intrepid and swashbuckling adventurer, Omar, assisted the blinded Omar (referred to as the "son-less Aeneas" [*OI*, 54] after the hero of Virgil's *Aeneid*) and his daughter to find refuge on Sambir with the Rajah of Patalolo. Aïssa and her father remained under the care of the Rajah but Babalatchi sought protection in Lakamba's household as the Rajah did not trust him. Babalatchi "was a vagabond of the seas, living by rapine and plunder of coasts and ships in his prosperous days [. . .] He was brave and bloodthirsty without any affection, and he hated the white men who interfered with the manly pursuits of throat-cutting, kidnapping, slave-dealing, and fire-raising, that were the only possible occupation for a true man of the sea" (*OI*, 51-52).

If the portrait of the one-eyed Babalatchi as a bloodthirsty buccaneer conjures

up stock notions of the barbarism and savagery of the other, then it is mitigated by the composite one of Tom Lingard who is also an adventurer of the high seas and who has no scruples about dealing in contraband. Lingard, to whom Christopher Gogwilt ascribes the epithet "the piratical Englishman of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*" (1995, 76), might not engage in the slave-trade or "kidnapping", as the word is conventionally understood, but he is responsible for the orphaning of the young girl who later becomes Mrs. Almayer in *Almayer's Folly*, when he engages in a bloody skirmish with her family of pirates. His taking charge of the young girl may be interpreted as an act of abduction as she always regarded herself as his property and expected to be his wife one day (*AF*, 22). If Lingard's violence is justified as the action of a benevolent despot, it is not viewed in the same light by the locals who are constantly plotting against him. In the game of naked power-brokering and political intrigue, Tom Lingard is the nonpareil, as he himself proclaims to Willems: "'[. . .] I have them all in my pocket. The rajah is an old friend of mine. My word is law - and I am the only trader'" (*OI*, 43). Daniel Schwarz has commented appropriately on the contact between Europeans and natives in Conrad's Malay novels: "[W]hite men and natives share similar passions and needs; both demonstrate the same potential for nobility and baseness. Almayer and Willems seek to exploit their racial position for economic gain [. . .] Conrad implies that what restrains Almayer and Willems from murder is not superior morality, but enervated instincts and atrophied will" (1980, 16).

If Willems is a vagabond of sorts, having left home as a youth and finding refuge and success with Lingard and Hudig, Babalatchi, like a true vagabond, is also pliable and adaptive to his surroundings. Very soon he begins to plot with Lakamba to use Willems in his plans to destroy Lingard's influence. Andrea White avers that like *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands* "tells more than the white's man's story; in fact, here the native telling takes over. Like the players of chess in Babalatchi's campong [. . .] Babalatchi manipulates the white men"

(1993, 146). If, as is commonly alleged in feminist and postcolonial criticism, Conrad denies the Other an authentic voice, then here the voice of the Other takes over, as Babalatchi confides to Lakamba:

> "I know the white men, Tuan [. . .] In many lands have I seen them; always the slaves of their desires, always ready to give up their strength and their reason into the hands of some woman. The fate of the Believers is written by the hand of the Mighty One, but they who worship many gods are thrown into the world with smooth foreheads, for any woman's hand to mark their destruction there. Let one white man destroy another [. . .] They know how to keep faith with their enemies, but towards each other they know only deception. Haï! I have seen!" (*OI*, 60)

After his dismissal by Hudig, Willems is once again a vagabond when his wife refuses to accompany him. It is then that he goes to Sambir where he meets Aïssa and becomes a pawn in the manipulative hands of Babalatchi, Lakamba and Abdulla, not least because of his own unscrupulous nature which would not stop short of betraying Lingard, his surrogate father and benefactor.

Robert Young (1995, 181) has proposed that sexual exchange brought about by colonialism was a reflection of the modes of economic exchange of property that constituted the basis of colonial relations. The exchange of bodies as goods was part of the colonial paradigm of marriage and respectability. Marriages of convenience and sexual exchange are integral to both *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands*, where the term "commerce" includes the trafficking of women's bodies across racial boundaries. It is patent that Almayer and Willems marry under duress, bribed by their capitalistic benefactors. Just as commodities in commercial exchange lose their allure when they are devalued, the women commodities of exchange also lose their attraction, hence the disillusionment of Almayer and Willems with their wives. All that Willems sees in his wife Joanna is

a slatternly figure in a "red dressing-gown, with its rows of dirty blue bows down the front [. . .] He saw the thin arm and the bony hand clasping the child she carried, and he felt an immense distaste for these encumbrances of his life" (*OI*, 25). This wife, who has been a doormat all her married life and taken for granted, wreaks vengeance when Willems suggests that they leave Hudig's bungalow after he has been dismissed by Hudig for embezzlement: "' Oh! You great man! [. . .] And you think I am going to starve with you. You are nobody now [. . .] Do not speak to me. I have heard what I have waited for all these years. You are less than dirt, you who have wiped your feet on me'" (*OI*, 27). Occupying critical space, as Ruth Nadelhaft has observed of Conrad's women characters (1991,13), both Aïssa and Joanna become the site from which powerful male colonial figures such as Willems and Lingard are interrogated.

Stephen Land describes Joanna as a "typical anti-heroine" (1984, 31), because in terms of his conception, the "anti-heroine usually opposes the hero's exertion of will, particularly in so far as this is a striving towards the world of the heroine" (1984, 3). The notion of an "anti-heroine" is consistent with Land's frame of reference because he models Willems as a kind of hero and Aïssa as the heroine. The evidence of the text, however, suggests that Joanna is not thwarting Willems's attempt to find his heroine. He simply wants her to go with him, but she, not to put too fine a point on it, is kicking him out. Her instinct for survival tells her that if she remains, her father Hudig would at least provide for her. When Willems raises his hand in an entreating gesture, Joanna screams out for help. The possibility that she has been beaten by Willems before cannot be ruled out, as Mrs. Vinck says to her husband towards the end of the first chapter, "'I have heard he beats his wife'" (*OI*, 10). If his wife's unexpected reaction to his plans has been a blow to his superior ego, it is nothing compared to what happens when his brother-in-law, Leonard, one of the "degenerate descendants" of the "Portuguese" responds to Joanna's scream and confronts Willems: "'Do not hurt her, Mr. Willems. You are savage. Not at all like we, whites'"(*OI*, 28). No one can fault

Conrad for lacking a sense of humour, even though the situation is far from amusing, charged as it is with mordant irony. After years of tacitly assuming his racial superiority over his wife and her family, Willems is diminished by this encounter with his wife and brother-in-law who makes racial capital out of a domestic squabble and accuses Willems of being a savage, the ultimate racist jibe, while he wields a rusty iron bar himself! This reversal of the savage/civilized trope and its deployment throughout the novel are a constant reminder of the madness of racial paranoia which lurks in the sub-conscious but surfaces in unguarded, irrational moments as will be illustrated further in this chapter.

Stephen Land, who traces a dualism or paradox in the paradigmatic structure of Conrad's work as a whole, has suggested that Willems, by taking a native woman as his lover, "takes possession of the black world as a possible place for the realization of his ideal" (1984, 32). Earlier on Land posits that the black world represents a negation of everything that the hero desires: obscurity instead of fame, and savagery instead of civility. In terms of his hypothesis, Aïssa represents the embodiment of Willems's ideal in a black world just as Joanna does in the white world. Again, this interpretation is synchronous with the Manichean design of a white world as opposed to a black world. The problem with this binaristic view is that Joanna is not white and she is far from the kind of ideal that Aïssa might represent. Joanna is the half-caste daughter of Hudig, and the picture of her is in sharp contrast to that of the ravishing Aïssa. The latter is a pale, hybrid woman, a descendant of Arabs and Malays, whom Willems, in one of his many racist outbursts describes as "a damned mongrel, half-Arab, half-Malay" (*OI*, 271). Babalatchi alludes to her as "'that woman with big eyes and a pale skin. Woman in body, but in heart a man! She knows no fear and no shame'" (*OI*, 49). The point about Willems's marriage to Joanna is that, like Almayer's marriage in *Almayer's Folly*, it turns out into a sterile relationship after the birth of his only child. It would appear that these marriages, contracted in an economy of capitalistic exchange on the basis of *quid pro quo*, are doomed to

failure once the initial gratification of material desire has been met and the commodity of exchange has lost its value.

As the theme of miscegenation is strongly represented in Conrad's Malayan works, it would be apposite to reflect on attitudes to sex, sexuality and interracial marriage in the nineteenth century. Robert Young (1995, 181) writes: "Nineteenth-century theories of sex did not just consist of essentializing differentiations between self and other: they were also about a fascination with people having sex - interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex". However, this general view needs qualification within the context of Conrad's novel and the different attitudes of the British empire as opposed to the Dutch empire in their approach to interracial relationships. Ronald Hyam, in *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (1990), which is a treatise on the prominent role played by sexuality in British empire-building, postulates that empire was the time of the maximization of sexual opportunity: "Everywhere, sexual opportunity was well to the fore [. . .] Because this was a world-wide empire maintained by sea communications, every journey to and from a posting or contract afforded at least the potential of sexual experience" (1990, 211). Hence, continues Hyam, with an inadvertent pun, "sexuality was the spearhead of racial contact" (211), and it became the site of racial fears. As the Purity Campaign in Britain in the late nineteenth century began to gather momentum, the level of tolerance towards intermarriages with native peoples began to diminish. As Hyam draws to his conclusion, he notes that the Purity Laws did not represent the ultimate truth about civilization, but rather a localized perception, a puritanical code attuned to the supposed needs of ruling a world-wide empire (215). In contrast to the British puritan attitude to miscegenation, the Dutch authorities accepted it as a highly fraught issue which had various implications for the rights of the spouses and children of interracial marriages. Because interracial marriages between European men and native women were quite common, and because concubinage was widespread and tolerated by the colonials, the Dutch authorities were mired

in a highly complex set of laws to protect the identity of their nationals, and at the same time negotiate around the issue of polygamy which was sanctioned by Islam but not Christianity. Ann L. Stoler (2000, 341) submits that the mixed marriage ruling of 1898 in Dutch colonies was applied selectively on the basis of class, gender and race. European men were assured of their nationality regardless of their legal partner, but European women marrying native men were disenfranchised. They could reclaim their nationality upon divorce or the death of the spouse.

The first point of this aside on the British and Dutch attitudes to sexuality and empire is that in the context of *An Outcast of the Islands*, the cross-cultural relationships of men such as Hudig and Willems are not regarded as illicit. Whilst the British readership would have been embarrassed by the interracial commerce between the sexes (and this prudish attitude is evident in the eliding of the subject in traditional Conradian criticism), the Dutch view sanctioned, if not accepted it as a matter of course, though not without a degree of hypocrisy in the arbitrary application of the law. The second, more important point of this argument is that in his relationship with Joanna and Aïssa, Willems is always assured of the privileges of his nationality. Whilst the women he associates with would be accepted legally under Dutch law and given European status, they would legally be dependent on him. It would be plausible then to draw the conclusion that Willems's relationship with Joanna, in terms of Robert Young's categorization of sexual behaviour in the foregoing paragraph, is "aleatory", whilst with Aïssa it is adulterous though not illicit. His construction of his identity therefore, in his relationships with women, is shaped by both personal traits as well as his image of himself as a superior European male *vis-à-vis* his native lovers. This is evinced in his attitude to his wife and her family in the opening chapter where even his brother-in-law, Leonard is so "humble before the white husband of the lucky sister" (*OI*, 3) because the marriage confers honorary European status on Joanna.

The promulgation of laws by the Dutch government recognizing and

legitimating interracial marriages might seem liberal and enlightened towards interracial contact. What this tends to gloss over, however, is that all laws enacted by empire were in its own interest and the interests of the male colonizer. In her exposition on the relationship between gender, race and class and empire generally, Anne McClintock (1995, 5-6) has drawn attention to the anomaly that, whilst "it was white, European men who, by the close of the nineteenth century, owned and managed 85 percent of the earth's surface", the crucial relation between gender and imperialism has until recently gone unacknowledged. There was more than enough reason, therefore, for the Dutch authorities to rubber-stamp the laws of the imperial bureaucracies. Hence, as McClintock postulates, colonized women, as slaves, agricultural workers, mothers, concubines and prostitutes, were disadvantaged in their societies as they had to negotiate their identities not only between the "imbalances of their relations with their own men but also the baroque and violent array of hierarchical rules and restrictions that structured their own relations with imperial men and women" (6).

The hybridized texture of Joanna's identity and existence as a half-caste herself and married to a European has its counterpart in some of the bizarre situations in the novel, such as her brother's claim to be "white" and superior to Willems, or the irrational outburst of Joanna in the charged atmosphere of the final pages of the novel. When Aïssa catches sight of Joanna's face, she recognizes her as a social and ethnic "inferior": "'A Sirani woman!'" (*OI*, 357). Joanna, on the other hand, clinging to her husband's arm utters, "' Drive her off, Peter. Drive off the heathen savage [. . .]'" (*OI*, 358). The insanity that attends this explosive cauldron of ethnic, religious and racial strife is aptly commented on by the narrator: "She [Joanna] seemed to have lost her head altogether" (*OI*, 358).

Religiously, culturally and racially, Aïssa too finds herself in a zone of hybridity where she has to construct her identity by negotiating her alterity as a half-Arab and a half-Malay woman. When she is alone or with Willems, she goes about

without her veil, an essential item of her Islamic attire. However, when she does appear in a veil "because a man of her race [is] near" (*OI*, 128), Willems is annoyed with her. The narrator adds, "This manifestation of her sense of proprieties was another sign of their hopeless diversity" (*OI*, 128). The veil not only preserves her modesty but also accentuates her gaze which Willems finds disconcerting - a point underscored by Rebecca Stott: "Aïssa's gaze too penetrates him" (1993, 42). Matters reach a head when he tears off her veil and "[tramples] upon it as though it had been a mortal enemy" (*OI*, 139). Aïssa's reaction to this outrage is unexpected. She looks at him with a faint smile of patient curiosity. By the end of this dramatic episode Aïssa emerges triumphant as Willems is in thrall to her seductive power which "[draws] the man's soul away from him" (*OI*, 140). Like Nina in *Almayer's Folly,* Aïssa rapidly acquires the life skills that enable her to reconcile the demands of her hybrid universe.

One of David Spurr's "rhetorical modes" (1999[1993],3) in his typology of tropes by which non-Western peoples are represented by Western writers, is termed "eroticization", a process by which the colonized territory represents not only sexual promise, but sexual danger as well (177). Taking his cue from postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Christopher Miller, James Clifford and Homi Bhabha (2), Spurr maintains that sexual excess leads to loss of individuation and the death of the human subject through the transgression of boundaries. He concludes that the non-Western world "stands for sexual debasement and death as well as sexual adventure" (183). Rebecca Stott expresses a similar view: "The non-European female body [. . .] in imperial texts is saturated with atavistic mystery and potentiality of meaning: it is the site of the secrets of prehistoric (untamed) nature, secrets of origin, secrets withheld from the white man" (1993, 42). The views of Spurr and Stott constitute an apt rejoinder to the conundrum posed by Edward Said: "Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies, is something on which one could speculate" (1995[1978],

188). Traditional scholarship on *An Outcast of the Islands* has exploited the theme of sexual surfeit and the resultant demise of the protagonist under the spell of a highly eroticized yet corrupt environment. Anne McClintock has given powerful expression to this aspect of colonial desire and adventure in far-off tropical settings by coining the term "porno-tropic tradition" (1995, 22). Going back to 1497 when Christopher Columbus, "blundering about in the Caribbean in search of India" (21), wrote home to say that the world was shaped like a woman's breast, McClintock avers that Columbus's image of the earth as a cosmic breast became a part of the "libidinously eroticized" view of continents such as Africa, the Americas and Asia. These continents "had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination" (22). McClintock discerns this porno-tropic tradition in which women were figured as the epitome of sexual aberration and excess in a line of Western representation from the time of the Renaissance to the adventure stories of Rider Haggard who popularized the image of "Sheba's Breasts" in *King Solomon's Mines*.

McClintock's conceit of porno-tropics finds a resonance in *An Outcast of the Islands* in the scene in which Willems and Aïssa meet for the first time. Finding his enforced confinement in Almayer's campong irksome, Willems wanders down the Pantai River in search of "some solitary spot where he [can] hide his discouragement and weariness" (*OI*, 66). When he spots Aïssa, he sees "a flash of white and colour, a gleam of gold like a sun-ray lost in shadow, and a vision of blackness darker than the deepest shade of the forest" (*OI*, 68). As Willems stares at her, he feels a "stirring of sleeping sensations awakening suddenly to the rush of new hopes, new fears, new desires" (*OI*, 69). Confronting her, he is "baffled, repelled, almost frightened by the intensity of that tropical life which wants the sunshine but works in gloom" (*OI*, 70). Purchasing into David Spurr's antithetical notion of desire and death, as well as Homi Bhabha's theory of the ambivalence and the antagonism of the desire of the Other (1994, 52), one notices that Conrad's protagonist is by turns entranced and repelled by Aïssa's

sensual beauty. The tropical life "holds the promise of joy and beauty, yet contains nothing but poison and decay" (*OI*, 70). Finding Aïssa enchanting, subduing and beautiful, Willems simply "look[s] at the woman" (*OI*, 70) in stupefaction.

On the subject of scopophilia and visual pleasure in narrative cinema, Laura Mulvey (1992[1974], 750) has written, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on the female figure which is styled accordingly". In the same essay Mulvey also states that the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification (751). On a similar subject, Homi Bhabha adds that in the objectification of the scopic drive there is always the threatened return of the look (1994, 81). In the encounter between Willems and Aïssa, the voyeuristic male gaze is about to be disrupted. As Aïssa approaches him "still nearer", he feels "a strange impatience within him at her advance" (*OI*, 70). Aïssa's face, which looks "like the face of a golden statue with living eyes" (*OI*, 71), sends him a "sidelong look: hard, keen, and narrow, like the gleam of sharp steel" (*OI*, 71). Her demeanour which gives "her whole person the expression of a wild and resentful defiance" (*OI*, 71), counteracts the stereotypical image of the passive female being objectified by the male gaze. Despite this, "in the face of doubt, of danger, of fear, and of destruction itself" (*OI*, 71), Willems utters, "'You are beautiful'" (*OI*, 71). That Willems's dalliance with Aïssa will not be an Edenic experience is prefigured in the final sentence of the chapter describing their encounter: "In the sombre beauty of her face that smile was like the first ray of light on a stormy daybreak that darts evanescent and pale through the gloomy clouds: the forerunner of sunrise and of thunder" (*OI*, 71). Aïssa's returning, disruptive gaze will come to haunt Willems who will not be able to bear the "burden of sexual objectification", to resort to Laura Mulvey's words.

Judith Butler (1993, ix) maintains that not only do bodies tend to indicate a

world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, is quite central to what bodies are. As a physical materiality, the body is the basis of human subjectivity and social presence. The body permeates identity, politics and other aspects of cultural existence. Along with colonialism's other myths about the other/Other, such as their congenital laziness, stupidity, savagery, cannibalism, and so forth, the myth about their promiscuity and sexuality has endured. If Aïssa represents the prospect of unlimited sexual gratification to Willems, then she too has her own myths about the body of the conquering European. Bigger and stronger than any man she has seen before, Willems appears to her as the member of "the victorious race" (*OI*, 75). From her memories of her own battles with members of that race in the past, she has imagined them "with hard blue eyes" (*OI*, 75) staring at their enemies. To her he was "indeed a man" (*OI*, 75):

> She could not understand all he told her of his life, but the fragments she understood she made up for herself into a story of a man great amongst his own people, valorous and unfortunate; an undaunted fugitive dreaming of vengeance against his enemies. He had all the attractiveness of the vague and the unknown - of the unforeseen and of the sudden; of a being strong, dangerous, alive, and human, ready to be enslaved. (*OI*, 75)

With only an imperfect understanding of his language - a vexed issue in postcolonial literary discourse - she constructs an image of him that appeals to her romantic side. Myth-making and stereotyping cut both ways. If Orientalism as a body of knowledge about the East perpetuates the myth of a feminized land waiting to be possessed, then Aïssa's myth about Willems also serves her own desire, namely, to enslave him. Gail Fraser ("Empire of the Senses" 1996, 138) has articulated this view cogently: "By mythologizing Willems, Aïssa is better able to control and master him: her 'work' is actually a colonizing project". The tropes

of sexuality and desire, imbricated in language, as Robert Young has indicated (1995, 5), are reversed by Conrad to interrogate fixed notions about the Other based on myths, hearsay, half-truths and stereotypes. From such half-truths emerge fallacious, essentialist constructions of the Other, such as Aïssa's conclusion at the end of the novel, just before the fatal climax, that Willems comes from "the land of lies and of evil from which nothing but misfortune comes to those who are not white" (*OI*, 359); or Babalatchi's view of Europeans: "'It is written that the earth belongs to those who have fair skins and hard but foolish hearts'" (*OI*, 226).

Aïssa's sexual power over Willems soon breaks down his overt sexism and male dominance. Willems, who was once "contemptuously indifferent to all feminine influence, full of scorn for men that would submit to it" (*OI*, 77), now finds his individuality snatched from him by the hand of a woman (*OI*, 77). What Albert Guerard has referred to as Willems's "sexual failure" (1980, 80), is an outcome of a mixture of anxiety and disgust. When the day of their assignation arrives, he flings her hand away brutally, but his "impulse of fear and apparent horror" (*OI*, 77) does not dismay her in the least:

> Her face was grave and her eyes looked seriously at him. Her fingers touched the hair of his temple, ran in a light caress down his cheek, twisted gently the end of his long moustache; and while he sat in the tremor of that contact, she ran off with startling fleetness and disappeared in a peal of clear laughter [.] (*OI*, 77-78)

What we witness is a reversal of the active/male, passive/female paradigm, which Susanne Kappeler, a feminist critic, enunciates in the following terms: "In the objectification of women as a gender, the subject, the objectifier, the surveyor of women is the male gender" (1986, 50). Aïssa flouts the traditional role of the gendered woman. In her society she inspires both admiration for her physical

beauty and courage, as well as disgust for her association with Willems, as Babalathchi says, "'She knows no fear and no shame'"(*OI*, 49). She represents the site of hybridity that, according to Homi Bhabha, "turn[s] the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (1994, 112). Rebecca Stott (1993, 45) contends that Willems's identity itself is threatened under the perpetual all-consuming gaze of Aïssa, who refuses to unveil. Her gaze reduces Willems to a querulous schoolboy who pleads to his surrogate father to rescue him from her eyes: "'I go to sleep, if I can, under her stare, and when I wake up I see them fixed on me and moving no more than the eyes of a corpse [. . .] The eyes of a savage [. . .] They hurt me! I am white! I swear to you I can't stand this! Take me away. I am white! All white!'" (*OI*, 271).

Albert Guerard, as observed early in this chapter (p. 112), has stated that Willems's passion is strong enough to conquer racial pride. That Willems has not conquered his racial pride is made plain at various junctures in the novel when he either muses privately on his own racial superiority, or is explicit about it as in the foregoing quote where he proclaims his whiteness to Lingard, or in the second epigraph to this chapter. These two extracts are taken from the latter pages of the novel as it gathers momentum towards its climax. However, Willems's disenchantment with Aïssa, in which his sense of his racial superiority plays no small role, is visible soon after his first assignation with her: "He, a white man whose worst fault till then had been a little want of judgment and too much confidence in the rectitude of his kind! That woman was a complete savage [. . .] He was disappointed with himself. He seemed to be surrendering to a wild creature the unstained purity of his life, of his race, of his civilization" (*OI*, 80). Willems's thoughts, clothed in the rhetoric of racism, have prompted the following response from John McClure: "Thus when white characters refer to Asians as 'miserable savages' and boast of their own 'pure and superior descent', the vicious stupidity of racist discourse becomes evident" (1985, 157). The hypocrisy of Willems's assumptions about the "unstained purity of his life" is underscored by

the irony that he has already compromised his moral and racial probity by leaving behind a half-caste wife and child, as well as a tarnished reputation with his former employer. To think that he entered into a transracial marital relationship simply because he was promised wealth and a roof over his head enriches the irony.

The centrality of racial and religious chauvinism in the thematic structure of the novel finds expression in the climactic scene just before Willems is fatally shot by Aïssa. As a prelude to this event, Conrad sketches a scenario in which the irrationality of racist and religious discourse reaches the height of imbecility. When Aïssa asks Willems who Joanna is, he responds, "'My wife according to our white law, which comes from God!'" (*OI*, 355). Aïssa's rejoinder is, "'Your law! Your God! [. . .] Your law . . . or your lies? What am I to believe? I came - I ran to defend you when I saw the strange men. You lied to me with your lips, with your eyes. You crooked heart!'" (*OI*, 358). Soon after, Willems speaks to his wife in Dutch: "'Snatch the boy - and my revolver there'" (*OI*, 358). It is also in this scene that Joanna refers to Aïssa as "the heathen savage" (*OI*, 358). Before Aïssa fires the revolver at Willems who lunges towards her, the narrator reports: "Hate filled the world, filled the space between them - the hate of race, the hate of hopeless diversity, the hate of blood; the hate against the man born in the land of lies and of evil from which nothing but misfortune comes to those who are not white" (*OI*, 359). It is at this point that the "maddened Aïssa" hears the voice of her dead father, Omar, saying, "'Kill! Kill!'" This scene, and especially the echo of the words of Omar, have led several critics to the erroneous conclusion that Aïssa's action is an act of jealousy and revenge, and even racial hatred, as suggested by Hampson: "[. . .] echoes that have the status of ancestral wisdom and a father's command [. . .] Omar completes his earlier attempt on Willems's life through his daughter"(1992, 62). Once again, the image of Aïssa as the *femme fatale* who wreaks vengeance on Willems is perpetuated at the expense of the evidence of the text.

Omar's words, coupled with the racist and religious diatribe of the protagonists

in this scene, have elicited the response from Hampson that Conrad buys into the Enlightenment model of barbarism, savagery and civilization - or at least, he makes use of this discourse (2000, 113). Hampson also proposes that the novel apparently accepts the hate of race, the hate of hopeless diversity and the hate of blood in the essentializing of racial difference (2000, 115). Reneging on this position, Hampson asserts in a footnote that there is "clearly a certain instability in the narratorial position" (2000, 216). He backs up his argument by referring to the text of *An Outcast of the Islands* where Conrad writes about alterity: "that illogical impulse of disapproval which is half-disgust, half vague fear, and what wakes up in our hearts in the presence of anything new or unusual [. . .] and the sense of superior virtue that leaves us deaf, blind, contemptuous and stupid before anything which is not like ourselves" (*OI*, 254). What Robert Hampson refers to as Conrad's narrative instability is reflected in the writer's well-known words in *A Personal Record* on the position adopted by the narrator: "Writing about them, he is only writing about himself. But the disclosure is not complete. He remains, to a certain extent, a figure behind the veil; a suspected rather than a seen presence - a movement and a voice behind the draperies of fiction" (*APR*, xiii).

Conrad's habitual scepticism, even about his own position on matters, is the source of much debate on his attitude to politics, race, gender and empire. Apparently purchasing into nineteenth-century racist or sexist discourse (the latter exemplified in the overwrought story "The Return") only to subvert this elsewhere in his writing, Conrad courts contentious judgements by scholars such as Robert Hampson and Linda Dryden who states: "While his treatment of Willems may be ironic, there lingers beneath the surface of his story the disturbing suggestion that Conrad actually endorses the notion of racial purity [. . .]" (2000, 82). Dryden arrives at this assessment from Conrad's reference to the sickly, half-caste child of Willems produced by his miscegenatious liaison with Joanna. The overwhelming irony of Willems's racial superiority which Conrad is at great pains

to delineate and subvert, militates against such a reading. This is manifest in the ease with which Willems is allowed to relapse into racist posturing and essentializing. He tyrannizes over his half-caste wife, child and family, then soon afterwards his latent racism bedevils his relationship with Aïssa, and surfaces in the climactic finale when he resorts to the comfort of his own European language and smug religious convictions to alienate Aïssa. In this regard Goonetilleke has commented: "Her inability to understand the conversation of the Europeans [. . .] points up Willems's cruelty and her pathetic position" (1990, 22). Goonetilleke rightly remarks that Conrad's implicit indictment of Willems makes the primitive person appear morally far superior to the civilized person (1990, 22), a view endorsed by Peter Firchow, referred to earlier (p.115).

The substance of Goonetilleke's and Firchow's criticism is perhaps one reason that *An Outcast of the Islands* suffered rigorous censorship for its first American edition in 1896. Gail Fraser ("Empire of the Senses" 1996, 137-138) throws interesting light on the history of the publication of the novel in America. Referring to a dissertation by M. G. Belcher completed in 1981 at Texas Tech University, Fraser draws attention to the fact that twelve passages, many as long as twenty lines, referring to a sexual relationship between Willems and Aïssa were removed. For twenty-five years readers in America without access to imported books read this version of the novel. The thrust of this censorship, opines Fraser, is that it had the damaging effect of concealing the fact that a native woman could have a civilizing influence on the sexual opportunist (1996, 138). Fraser's conclusion, however, is that Conrad's portrayal of Willems and Aïssa emphasizes the irreconcilable differences between them and reveals the writer's scepticism about longer-term control and exploitation of tropical territories (1996, 142). To substantiate this claim, Fraser refers to a fragment of the letter Conrad wrote to Garnett in which he proclaimed, "The senses are done with! Nothing lasts!" The letter in question continues:

> So with Aïssa. Her passion is burnt out too. There is in her that desire to be something for him - to be in his mind in his heart [sic] - to shelter him in her affection - her woman's affection which is simply the ambition to be an important factor in another's life. They both long to have a significance in the order of nature or of society. To me they are typical of mankind where every individual wishes to assert his power, woman by sentiment, man by achievement of some sort - mostly base. (Karl and Davies 1983, 247)

If Aïssa represents the power of sentiment over Willems's "base" achievement and his desire for self-aggrandisement at any cost, then the novel enacts the triumph of sentiment over material desire. Whilst the senses may be done with, as is the way of all senses, there is a spirituality about Aïssa even as she turns into "a doubled-up crone" (*OI*, 366). As previously argued, the death of Willems has been dismissed in so perfunctory a fashion by most critics, with Aïssa as the agency of death, that the details remain obfuscatory. Before Willems "[throws] his body forward" at Aïssa to wrest the gun away from her, she warns him, in a halting manner, to leave with his wife and child, with the words, "'Go while I remember yet . . . remember . . .'" (*OI*, 360). If the memory is a repository of life's sensory impressions long after the senses have gone, as Wordsworth and the Romantics remind us, then Aïssa's passion is not quite spent. It lives with her memory after Willems's death.

Ruth Nadelhaft (1991, 30) argues that in the character of Aïssa, Conrad created a woman of enormous charm and beauty who attracts and terrifies both Willems and the writer himself! At a time when the late-Victorian reader was accustomed to the affirmation of the male ego and identity, Aïssa represents an antithetical version of this image. Not even Lingard, the quintessential adventurer and symbol of Western patriarchy in Conrad's Malay trilogy, is a match for her. When he orders her out of his path, saying that when men meet in daylight, women must be silent, she retorts: "'Women! [. . .] Yes, I am a woman! [. . .] I also

have heard the voice of firearms [. . .] I also saw men fall dead around me without a cry of fear and of mourning [. . .] What more have you done? That was my life. What has been yours?'" (*OI*, 245). Lingard's reaction is one of admiration tempered with patriarchal authority: "'[You] are a woman whose heart, I believe, is great enough to fill a man's breast: but still you are a woman, and to you, I, Rajah Laut, have nothing to say '" (*OI*, 246). Lingard's refusal to communicate further with Aïssa parallels the indifference of several generations of mainly male critics who have made short shrift of her role in the text, preferring to view her as the savage woman whose wild passion enslaves and emasculates Willems in the corrupting jungles of Borneo. That Aïssa was not even regarded as a character by most of the reviewers of the novel, as illustrated earlier, testifies to this indifference.

III.

As already noted in this chapter, the narrator reports that Willems "prided himself upon having no colour-prejudices and no racial antipathies" (p. 123). Gail Fraser indicates that this sentence was added on by Conrad after the manuscript stage ("Empire of the Senses" 1996, 140). Fraser attributes this to the "official" European attitude which does not acknowledge the unconscious nature of racial antipathy and its link to economic and political power. The discrepancy between the "official" position Willems holds on alterity and the real one manifested in the performance of his identity reflects the highly problematized construction of identity when Europeans, Malays, Arabs, Chinese and half-castes are thrown together. As in Conrad's mature works, the question of how to represent the other/Other takes on crucial importance in *An Outcast of the Islands*. What the novel explores is not only the identity of those like Willems, Aïssa and Joanna who transgress racial boundaries, but also the attitudes of those whose lives need to be thought "beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities", to cite Homi

Bhabha (1994, 1). Echoing Bhabha, Robert Hampson affirms, "Babalatchi's adaptability is set against Willems's inability to adapt, his desperate assertion (like Almayer) of an originary identity" (2000, 109). Unlike Willems, who is attitudinized as having no colour- prejudices and no racial antipathies but who cannot transcend his racial pride, Aïssa is prepared to shed her racial and cultural conditioning in a "fluid performance of identity", to quote Hampson in a slightly different context (2000, 109).

Guided by the question as to what extent characters are prepared to negotiate, construct and perform their identities in a conflictual climate of alterity, this chapter brings under scrutiny diverse characters who meet in contact zones of empire and construct their identities *vis-à-vis* one another across racial, cultural, and gender divides, and sometimes, like Willems, Aïssa and Joanna, even transgressing these boundaries. By subjecting his characters to his microscopic gaze, Conrad dissolves the boundaries within which subjectivities are produced and become fixed. John McClure observes that if "Conrad challenges the European representation of Malays as uniformly savage and inferior, he does not do so in order to replace that representation with an idyllic one" (1985, 158). Conrad spares neither whites nor the natives in his dissection of humanity. Far from being represented as submissive, the natives are given their own voice, agency and authority. They can be just as conniving as the Europeans and also chauvinistic. While Willems may gain his sense of superiority from being white, people such as Babalatchi, Omar and Lakamba, derive their arrogance from their religious chauvinism, thus relegating Willems to the status of the infidel.

In his treatise *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1990[1950], 121), Mannoni professes that all conflicts between individuals, families and peoples can be settled by arbitration, but "once the idea of race is allowed in, once the dispute becomes a racial conflict between two race-conscious peoples, then there is no hope of solution". If Conrad has succeeded in conveying the extent to which the issues of racial, cultural and religious differences can

easily turn into paranoia, then a minor incident involving the Chinese, Jim-Eng, may be cited as a coda to this chapter to illustrate the baroque nature of racial obsession. When Jim-Eng is pursued by about fifty of Lakamba's men for not bowing to the Dutch flag, Almayer advises him to escape in one of his canoes. Jim-Eng refuses, saying that he is English and he would fight the lot: "'They are only black fellows. We white men [. . .] can fight everybody in Sambir'" (*OI*, 182). At this point the narrator, Almayer, innocuously adds: "'He was mad with passion'". Amongst other things, it is such passion, such madness issuing from the irrational discourse of race and racism that is explored in *An Outcast of the Islands*.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE BOYS' CLUB - *LORD JIM : A TALE* AND *THE RESCUE: A ROMANCE OF THE SHALLOWS*

> To intervene in the present means, then, to interrupt the performance of the present, by exploiting the in-between spaces. I understand this space, as a liminal space [. . .] a transitory space, a space other, a third space that is not here/there, but both. This third space implies the inscription and possibility of voices which until now have been silenced or remained underground [.]. (Fernando de Toro 1999, 20)

> "He [Dain Waris] was not the visible, tangible incarnation of unfailing truth and of unfailing victory. Beloved, trusted, and admired as he was, he was still one of *them*, while Jim was one of *us*." (*LJ*, 361)

> Their country of land and water - for the sea was as much their country as the earth of their islands - has fallen a prey to the western race - the reward of superior strength if not of superior virtue. (*TR*, 3)

I.

Juliet McLauchlan, writing of Almayer and Willems, concludes her essay thus: "Through Almayer (in contrast to Dain and Nina) and, supremely, through Willems, Conrad has shown in *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* 'how not to be'"(1990[1979], 104). The present chapter, which focuses on *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue*, examines the notion of what it means, firstly, "to be", and secondly, to be either a "gentleman" or a "friend", cast in an alien environment where different cultures meet and clash. Within the interstices of this predominant theme, the

stereotypes of "us" and "them" will be subjected to scrutiny with a view to establishing to what extent individuals succeed in constructing their identity in a manner that frees them from the colonialist mental space of binaries, or, what Abdul JanMohamed has termed "the manichean allegory" which he argues gives impetus to the fundamental drive of the colonist to impose oneself on the Other (1985, 66). Attention will also be directed to how critical discourse has colluded with ideology to marginalize the indigenous women in these two novels.

The pairing of *Lord Jim* (1900) and *The Rescue* (1920), under the thematic rubric of "The Boys' Club", enables an interrogation of what it means to be perceived as "one of us", as opposed to "one of them". Whilst these two texts might seem distant from each other in terms of their chronology, they constitute the intertextual matrix of Conrad's Malaysian setting, which, to use the words of Cunninghame Graham, includes all "the great gallery of rogues, the flotsam and the jetsam that the Pacific throws on its beaches" (*Introduction* to Everyman's Edition of *Lord Jim* 1935, ix). The motif "one of us", which is deployed throughout *Lord Jim*, transfers, not unproblematically, to *The Rescue* which assesses the role of Tom Lingard as the lover of Mrs. Travers and the friend of the Malay brother and sister, Hassim and Immada.

Thematically, the contiguity of *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue* is far from fortuitous as both novels feature European protagonists whose interventions in the day-to-day affairs of the Malays, Arabs and other minor tribes in the Archipelago have a destabilizing effect despite their avowed altruism. Virginia Woolf, in an unsigned review of *The Rescue* in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 01 July 1920, alluded obliquely to its uncanny resemblance to *Lord Jim*: "The worst compliment we could pay Mr. Conrad would be to talk of *The Rescue* as it were an attempt to rewrite *Lord Jim* twenty years later" (Sherry 1973, 332). This suggestion has been subsequently endorsed by Thomas Moser (1966[1957], 145) and Albert Guerard (1958, 84-85) who points out that the published text of *The Rescue* is very different from "The Rescuer" manuscript, with a chastening of style and some

weakening of conception.

That both Jim and Lingard have been figured as romantic egoists is not surprising, considering that by April 1896 Conrad had already written eleven pages of the "Rescuer", as he communicates in his letter to Katherine Sanderson, dated 06 April 1896 (Karl and Davies 1983, 271). In view of the fact that the first three parts of *The Rescue* - out of a total of six - reflect work done in the 1890s, as pointed out by Guerard (1958, 84), then *Lord Jim*, published in 1900, was written between the conception, gestation and delivery of *The Rescue* which was only published in 1920. Such being the historical circumstances of the production of *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue*, it is not inconceivable to expect strong elements of intertextuality between these two texts as well as with other contemporaneous work of the Malayan period, such as *An Outcast of the Islands*, which Guerard finds interesting only for its "situational prefigurations of *Lord Jim*" (1958, 81).

II.

The notion of identity or what it means "to be" is central to *Lord Jim*. How Marlow writes Jim, which reveals a great deal about Marlow's construction of both himself and Jim, and how the reader views him, are signalled by Stein who resorts to the words of "'[the] great poet'" (*LJ*, 213): "'That is the question . . . How to be! *Ach*! How to be'". It is not coincidental that Stein should invoke Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as the existential question of what it means to be for oneself and for others drives the endeavour that is constitutive of literature. The psychoanalyst R. D. Laing has proclaimed in his landmark publication, *Self and Others*: "All 'identities' require an other: some other in and through a relationship with whom self-identity is actualized" (1969[1961], 82). The enigmatic hero of Shakespeare's play finds a counterpart in the romantic figure of Conrad's Jim. John Batchelor, referring to *Hamlet* as "the Shakespeare play closest to *Lord Jim*" (1994, 107), has observed that *Hamlet* and *Lord Jim* are both written at the ends of their respective

centuries (1599-1600 in the case of *Hamlet* and 1899-1900 in the case of *Lord Jim*), and as such they are both consciously innovative, dealing with "an anguished and divided anti-hero" (109).

Having struck a Shakespearean posture, Stein philosophizes on the various permutations of identity open to the subject. Unlike the magnificent butterfly which "finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it" (*LJ*, 213), humans are constantly seeking to invent themselves. Sometimes the impulse is to be "a saint" (*LJ*, 213); at other times it is to be "a devil" (*LJ*, 213). Like Jim, humans strive for perfection which is only an illusion: "' . . . he sees himself as a very fine fellow - so fine as he can never be . . . In a dream . . .'" (*LJ*, 213). Stein's ruminations, punctuated by a series of ellipses, point to the impossibility of achieving the ideal of a single, stable notion of identity, of the kind that Stuart Hall (1990, 223) characterizes as providing people with a stable, unchanging and continuous frame of reference and meaning; in other words, an identity that confirms the ontology of the "black experience" or the essence of "Caribbeaness". Transposed to Marlow's context, this essence can be equated with the status of "one of us". However, Marlow's neat formulation contradicts Stein's position, which acknowledges man's pursuit of the ideal but concedes that such an ideal can only be the stuff of dreams: "'That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream - and so . . . *ad finem*'" (*LJ*, 214-215).

In recent scholarship on *Lord Jim*, at least two sources have focussed on the significance of the title as a point of departure from the usual preoccupation with the novel's psychological subtlety and narrative virtuosity. Allan Simmons (2000, 31), who examines the proleptic structure of events in the novel, begins his essay with the comment: "*Lord Jim* advertises its concern with the troubled identity of its central character from its very title, that combines the honorific 'Lord' with the demotic 'Jim', suggesting that Jim's identity lies somewhere between these two signifiers". Simmons's view chimes in with the two-part structure of the novel, one dealing with the episode of the *Patna* when the protagonist is known as "Jim", and

the other with his stay in Patusan where he receives the title "Tuan". Jacques Berthoud (2002, xiii) has also drawn attention to the title, pointing to its oxymoron which suggests a "mild collision between the up-market 'Lord' and the democratic 'Jim'" (2002, xiii). For Berthoud, the title signals its social and cultural dynamics, issues which he maintains have been largely, if not wholly ignored. Extrapolating from the observations of Simmons and Berthoud, one might postulate that Jim's identity is dichotomized along the lines of the two worlds he inhabits. The extent to which he would be able to reconcile the world of the British merchant navy, apotheosized in, and by, the figure of Marlow, with his new-found identity in Oriental Patusan, will be determined no less by how he performs his own identity in relation to the other/Other, than how Marlow conceives of him and presents him to the reader (who would have been a subscriber to *Blackwood's Magazine*).

The importance of Marlow to the telling of Jim's narrative is a fact taken for granted. However, his construction of Jim is far from disinterested, as he admits: "'He existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you. I've led him out by the hand; I have paraded him before you'" (*LJ*, 224). Marlow's central position in mediating the identity of his surrogate son has been given expression by Tony Tanner in the following terms: "[When] he asserts that Jim was 'one of us' - meaning a western seaman - Jim becomes, by extension, one of 'us', the readers [. . .] and we watch Jim through his eyes, not for victorious thrills and adventures, but for the generally relevant psychological truths to be revealed" (1963, 13). If the reader's perception of Jim's identity is rooted in Jim's own romantic notions about himself as well as Marlow's disingenuous presentation of his character, then, as will be illustrated presently, the authorial voice (Conrad's) interposes either to countermand or subvert Marlow's version.

Mikhail Bakhtin has argued that self-identity is only achieved in relation to other individuals: "To be means to be for an other, and through the other, for oneself [. . .] I cannot become myself without an other; I must find myself in an other [. . .] I receive my name from others" (1984, 287-288). This concept is

diametrically opposed to the Cartesian declaration which formed the cornerstone of Enlightenment thinking on subjectivity: "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). It is important to note that Jim's identity is predicated not only on what he thinks of himself but also what others think of him. This perception is reinforced by the headnote after the title of the novel: "It is certain my Conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it". According to Jacques Berthoud, this epigraph, taken from "Novalis", the pen name of the German Romantic poet Friedrich von Hardenberg, draws attention to the fact that what we are is not a matter that depends on us alone (2002, 317).

It is a commonplace of literary study that we learn about characters by what they think and say, what they do, and what others say about them. Jim's character is construed by readers not so much by what he thinks and does, but by what the frame narrator says, what Marlow thinks and says, and what others say about him. From the frame narrator's introduction to Jim in the opening paragraph of the novel, which is a veritable pen-portrait of the protagonist in fewer than one hundred and thirty words, we learn about his approximate height, his voice, his demeanour and his dress - in short, his personality. As further brushstrokes are added to complete Jim's portrait, we learn that he has "Ability in the abstract" (*LJ*, 4); that his keen perception of the "Intolerable" drove him away for good from seaports and white men to the Malay forests where the natives called him "Tuan Jim: as one might say - Lord Jim" (*LJ, 5)*; and that Jim's father, a parson, had implicit belief in the "Unknowable" and "Providence" (*LJ*, 5). One of five sons, Jim declared his vocation for the sea after a "course of light holiday literature" (*LJ*, 5). The effect of this exposure to adventure stories was that Jim imagined himself "saving people from sinking ships" (*LJ*, 6), "confront[ing] savages on tropical shores, quell[ing] mutinies on the high seas" (*LJ*, 6), and always "an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book" (*LJ*, 6).

Jonathan Culler (1997, 113) contends: "Poems and novels address us in ways that demand identification, and identification works to create identity: we

become who we are by identifying with figures we read about". Jim, to use Louis Althusser's formulation, is interpellated by the kind of literature on which he has been nourished. Like many a Victorian schoolboy he projects himself as the quintessential Robinson Crusoe, "a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked" (*LJ*, 6), engaging with "savages" on tropical shores. Even if he fails to save people from sinking ships, as the episode of the "more or less" (*LJ*, 14) eight hundred Muslim pilgrims on the *Patna* ironically counterpoints, he does get to quell mutinies in Patusan and eventually die as a textbook hero with "a proud and unflinching glance" (*LJ*, 416) after he is shot by the father of Dain Waris for whose death Jim is ultimately responsible.

Homi Bhabha (1994, 98-99) presents an interesting account of an interview with an Indian Pilgrim recorded in the journal of the missionary C. T. E. Rhenius in 1818. When asked by Rhenius if he knows God, the Pilgrim responds, "I know he is in me. When you put rice into a mortar and stamp it with a pestle, the rice gets clean. So God is known to me [. . .]". At this juncture the missionary records: "[. . .] the comparisons of the Heathen are often incomprehensible to the European". Upon being asked by the Pilgrim in what shape he sees God, the missionary replies: "In the shape of the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Eternal, the Unchangeable, the Holy One, the Righteous, the Truth, the Wisdom and the Love". The thrust of Bhabha's exposition is that from the perspective of the colonizer, passionate for unbounded possession, the problem of truth turns into the political and psychic question of boundary and territory. The resounding absolutes in which the missionary sees God contrasts with the seemingly naive aphorisms of the native pilgrim. The colonist's narcissistic, authoritarian demand to know, is "contained in the language of paranoia" (Bhabha 1994, 100). In *Lord Jim*, the frame narrator's deeply resonant intonations of "Ability in the abstract" (mentioned twice on page 4), the "Intolerable", the "Unknowable" and "Providence" are the cultural markers that define Jim and account for his own paranoia, narcissism and territoriality:

> At such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with a heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself. There was nothing he could not face. (*LJ*, 20)

Jim's heroic persona is in keeping with the ethos of the British public schooling system of the late Victorian era. Ronald Hyam (1990, 72-73) avers: "The late nineteenth century cult of manliness became a powerful and pervasive middle-class moral code". Referring to the era of about 1860 to 1914 as the golden age of athleticism, Hyam argues that organized games were a means of artificially providing adversity: "The need to experience pain was held to be a necessary preparation for the self-reliance and wretchedness of the imperial frontier" (1990, 73). The games ethic, which emphasized stamina and grit and team spirit, helped to produce useful colonists. Jacques Berthoud proclaims that the English infatuation with the heroic ideals of Camelot was made to serve the profits of gentlemanly capitalism (2002, xvi). Marlow, as the voice of the gentleman capitalist in the novel, epitomizes the British merchant seaman whose identity, as Gail Fincham posits, is as much at stake as Jim's (1997, 62). In constantly recalling Jim's kinship with "one of us", Marlow attempts to reaffirm Jim's heroic stature and redeem his lost honour.

The idea that Marlow appropriates Jim's character into an exclusive male circle, as embodied in the rubric to this chapter, "The Boys' Club", has been echoed by Scott McCracken (1993, 18) in an essay which pursues a masculinist reading of *Lord Jim*. McCracken notes: "The 'boy's own' nature of Conrad's narratives constructs a romance of lonely masculinity, where ultimate self-sufficiency, the ideal of Heyst's island in *Victory*, is an unattainable utopia". An

intertextual comparison with another Malayan novel might be irresistible to McCracken, but the comparison with Axel Heyst is, in my view, untenable on account of his detachment from society, which stands in sharp contrast to Jim's social commitment in Patusan. Notwithstanding this minor qualification, the notion of male exclusivity underpins Marlow's narrative of Jim's career, although this male circle will be disrupted by Marlow's own narrative voice as will be illustrated in due course. An important insight afforded by McCracken is that Marlow's narration preserves the masculine perspective through the manner in which the tale is told, man to man (1993, 38). Not only is this observation pertinent to *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*, but it is reinforced in the maritime culture of the colonial era when seagoing vessels were microcosms of masculine society from which women were generally excluded.

Endemic to Marlow's masculinist discourse and to his conception of the "Boys' Club" is the dynamic of race and racial otherness. Once more, to appeal to Scott McCracken's essay, race, together with gender and class, merits priority: "'Race' in *Lord Jim* signifies as a crucial Other of white masculine subjectivity" (1993, 34). What Bette London (1990, 50) has said of Marlow in the context of *Heart of Darkness* is also of relevance here: "In Marlow's case this means writing out or writing over the traces of otherness imprinted on his voice; [in] suppressing or displacing identifications of the feminine and non-white, Marlow produces a voice that conforms to colonial ideology, that conforms to the voice his culture writes for him". The first time the issue of race insinuates itself into the novel is when the frame narrator reports casually that Jim, after he is disabled by a falling spar, is in a hospital with "only two other patients in the white men's ward" (*LJ*, 12). In the colonial context there is nothing unusual about the segregation of Europeans and natives. What is remarkable in this particular context is that almost immediately after this fact we are informed that one of the two white patients regarded the doctor (presumably European) as an "ass" (*LJ*, 12), and "indulged in secret

debaucheries of patent medicine which his Tamil servant used to smuggle in with unwearied devotion" (*LJ*, 12). A white man, trusting to the placebos of his dark-skinned servant, is only one of the multitude of ironies in the text, which points consistently to the deconstructive potential in the ambivalent voice of the frame narrator as well as Marlow.

There are other instances of racial allusions with their attendant ironies presented by the frame narrator in the very early chapters of the text. During his convalescence, Jim comes across two kinds of white men: the one possessed of the "temper of buccaneers" (*LJ*, 12) and the other,

> who were attuned to the eternal peace of Eastern sky and sea. They loved short passages, good deck-chairs, large native crews, and the distinction of being white. They shuddered at the thought of hard work, and led precariously easy lives, always on the verge of dismissal, always on the verge of engagement, serving Chinamen, Arabs, half-castes - would have served the devil himself had he made it easy enough. (*LJ*, 13)

The racially variegated texture of Conrad's fictional world finds expression in the ownership of the *Patna*. It was owned by a Chinaman, chartered by an Arab and commanded by a renegade New South Wales German, who, on the strength of Bismarck's victorious policy, wore a blood-and-iron air, and brutalized those he was not afraid of (*LJ*, 14).

Having taken a sardonic tilt at the Iron Chancellor Bismarck and his cowardly protégé by proxy, the narrator reports the German skipper's reaction as the Muslim pilgrims file into the vessel: "Look at dese cattle" (*LJ*, 15). This remark, coming hard on the lengthy account of the sacrifice and suffering of the Muslim pilgrims who are treated with due reverence by the frame narrator, only serves to emphasize the skipper's insensitivity, racism and gross commercialism. His racist

attitude and crass materialist instinct are registered in the sentence: "The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo" (*LJ*, 16). As always in Conrad, the juxtaposition of races and racial categories is never without its ironic investment as evinced in the following narratorial observation once the pilgrims are berthed on the *Patna*: "Below the roof of awnings, surrendered to the wisdom of white men and to their courage, trusting the power of their unbelief and the iron shell of their fire-ship, the pilgrims of an exacting faith slept [.]" (*LJ*, 17-18). Wisdom and courage, as this study upholds, are not the sole prerogative of any race, gender or class. The fallacy of apportioning vices or virtues on the basis of race is counterpointed in *Lord Jim* when the vaunted "wisdom" and "courage" of the five white men desert them in the central crisis of the novel which leads to the protagonist's infamous jump and his search for an alternative identity in Patusan.

In Patusan, where Dutch and English adventurers went in the seventeenth century, Jim's racial otherness becomes indelibly inscribed in the lives of the natives. The narrative voice of Marlow, which replaces that of the frame narrator in the early chapters, accentuates Jim's racial superiority on the one hand, but also offers a scathing critique of empire on the other. Speaking of the traders who went to Patusan for pepper, he comments with withering irony : "'For a bag of pepper they would cut each other's throats without hesitation, and would forswear their souls, of which they were so careful otherwise [.]'" (*LJ*, 226). An aspirant Robinson Crusoe, Jim does have the opportunity of putting down "'antagonistic forces'" (*LJ*, 228), one of the worst being Rajah Allang who "'did the extorting and the stealing, and ground down to the point of extinction the country-born Malays'" (*LJ*, 228). Marlow's perception of his protégé's racial superiority and difference is conveyed in an interplay of images of light and darkness, not unlike as in *Heart of Darkness*:

> In the midst of these dark-faced men, his stalwart figure in white apparel, the gleaming cluster of his fair hair, seemed to catch all the sunshine that

> trickled through the cracks in the closed shutters of that dim hall, with its walls of mats and a roof of thatch. He appeared like a creature not only of another kind but of another essence. Had they not seen him come up in a canoe they might have thought he had descended upon them from the clouds. (*LJ*, 229)

This almost divine incarnation of Jim in Patusan earns him the honorific "Lord", or as the boatman refers to him, "Tuan Jim" (*LJ*, 242).

It is Marlow who takes the reader along with Jim to Patusan which the latter is "destined to fill with the frame of his virtues, from the blue peaks inland to the white ribbon of surf on the coast" (*LJ*, 243). The presumptuous tone of this comment is neatly subverted by the authorial irony that Jim's conduct is far from virtuous just moments before the *Patna* presumably "sank". Marlow's portrayal of Jim as he enters Patusan is in the figure of a bridegroom who is about to meet his bride: "'And his opportunity sat veiled by his side like an Eastern bride waiting to be uncovered by the hand of the master'" (*LJ*, 244). Marlow then adds: "'He, too, was the heir of a shadowy and mighty tradition!'" (*LJ*, 244). The irony hinted at in the word "shadowy" begins to unravel as we learn that despite his "'heroic health'" (*LJ*, 244), Jim experiences "'fits of giddiness'" (*LJ*, 244) and speculates on "'the size of the blister the sun [is] raising on his back'" (*LJ*, 244). The anticipation of joy felt by a bridegroom contemplating his veiled bride is soon replaced by the stark reality of alligators in the river, one of which "'all but capsiz[es] the canoe'" (*LJ*, 244). Hope and expectation are counterpoised by the ironic remark: "'Such was the way in which he was approaching greatness as genuine as any man ever achieved'" (*LJ*, 244). Oblivious of everything around him, Jim is the antithesis of the romantic hero in colonial literature. He carries a revolver which is unloaded and is unaware that the three paddlers plan to betray him and deliver him to the Rajah Allang. In retrospect, after he escapes from the Rajah's stockade, Jim brags to Marlow, "'It's the knowledge that had I been wiped out it is this place that

would have been the loser'" (*LJ*, 245). Jim's romantic yearnings, coupled with his sense of self-importance, are summed up in the final sentence of Chapter 24: "'That is why he seemed to love the land and the people with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness'" (*LJ*, 248).

Jim's attitude to the land he will fill with the "frame of his virtues" typifies the gesture of the colonist to the object of his conquest. The feminization of the land to be conquered has become a common trope in postcolonial discourse. Anne McClintock (1995, 24) captures this tendency with astringency: "[The] feminizing of terra incognita was, from the outset, a strategy of violent containment [. . .] a familiar symptom of male megalomania, it also betrays acute paranoia and a profound, if not pathological, sense of male anxiety and boundary loss". McClintock's argument that women are the boundary markers of empire has been consistently maintained in the critique of Padmini Mongia who contends that *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness* feminize the relation between adventurer and topography (1996, 124). Jim's (Marlow's) metaphoric conception of Patusan as a veiled bride fits perfectly into the paradigm of McClintock, Mongia as well as Ania Loomba who states that in contrast to the nakedness of Africa and America in early modern iconographic representations, Asia is always sumptuously clothed (1998, 152). Complementing Jim's infatuation with Patusan is his liaison with the young woman of Malay and European ancestry whom Jim has named Jewel, "'in the sense of a precious gem - jewel'" (*LJ*, 277). Marlow tells us that romance "'had singled Jim for its own [. . .] He did not hide his jewel. In fact, he was extremely proud of it'" (*LJ*, 282).

The stepdaughter of Cornelius, Jewel is the object of emotional abuse by her father: "'Your mother was a devil, a deceitful devil - and you, too, are a devil'" (*LJ*, 288). Jewel's reaction would be to "hold out full of scorn, confronting him in silence [. . .] now and then uttering a word or two [. . .]'" (*LJ*, 288). Conrad (Marlow) devotes more textual space to describing Jewel's affection for Jim than the other way round. Jewel loves him with a passion that recalls Aïssa in *An*

Outcast of the Islands: "'He was jealously loved, but why she should be jealous, and of what, I could not tell. The land, the people, the forests were her accomplices, guarding him with vigilant accord, with an air of seclusion, of mystery, of invincible possession'" (*LJ*, 283). Despite being a forceful presence in the Patusan segment of Jim's life, Jewel initially did not receive the kind of critical attention which postcolonial feminist readings have afforded her. To take one example, Albert Guerard's *Conrad the Novelist* (1958), a touchstone in Conradian criticism, expends almost fifty pages on a two-part critique of the text, yet barely mentions Jewel, except in passing. When she does receive any attention of note, it comes as an anticlimax in the discussion: "We may add that a characteristic mediocrity sets in with the introduction of Jewel in Chapter 28: with women and their frightening 'extra-terrestrial touch,' the second standard ingredient of exotic romance" (1958, 168) - the first ingredient, of course, being physical peril. Earlier, in his discussion on *An Outcast of the Islands* where he compares Jewel to Aïssa who questions Lingard on the status of Willems in the outside world, Guerard writes: "[So] Jewel will question Marlow and complain" (1958, 81).

Jewel, as Guerard prefers to ignore, does more than just complain, and her severe marginalization replicates the treatment of Aïssa by reviewers of *An Outcast of the Islands*. Norman Sherry presents a selection of ten reviews on *Lord Jim* in his anthology, *Conrad: The Critical Heritage* (1973), of which only two mention Jim's love interest in Jewel. Of the two, one mentions her by name, and the other refers to her as the "Malay girl" (1973, 112). Jewel invites comparison with Aïssa on several levels. Apart from representing the fate of the Oriental woman who fears that her European lover will some day leave her for his white world, Jewel, like Aïssa, acts as a foil to the conception of the romantic hero by exposing his vulnerability. On the night when she saves Jim's life from an assassination plot, it is she who loads his revolver which he keeps around his person unloaded: "'[At] once she put into his hand a revolver, his own revolver,

which had been hanging on a nail, but loaded this time'" (*LJ*, 297). Handing the firearm to him she asks "'Can you face four men with this?'" Later in the story when Jim is away for over a week and there is a confrontation with Gentleman Brown's crew, it is Jewel who guards the key to Jim's supply of gunpowder, the only one in Patusan. It is also to her that Dain Waris goes "'at the first intelligence of danger'" (*LJ*, 362). As Marlow recounts, "'[She] stood up by the side of Jim's empty chair at the head of the long table and made a warlike impassioned speech, which for the moment extorted murmurs of approbation from the assembled headmen'" (*LJ*, 362). Like Aïssa, Jewel is a stranger to the language of her lover, although she had learned "'a good bit of English from Jim'" (*LJ*, 283). In moments of crisis when she cannot comprehend the motives of Jim, she lapses into dialect the way Aïssa does. All she understands about Jim is what she has always feared, as she indicates to Marlow: "'He has left me [. . .] you always leave us - for your own ends [. . .] What makes you so wicked? Or is it that you are all mad?'" (*LJ*, 348). Despite Jewel's commanding presence in the novel, it is not surprising that she has been sidelined by (male) critics in a manner that recalls Bette London's comment about Marlow's narrative in *Heart of Darkness*: "The production of narrative thus colludes with ideology to keep women in their place" (1990, 38-39).

While the story of Jim is largely a production of the narrative of "man to man", as Scott McCracken has termed it (1993, 38), the inflated Western masculinist discourse of Marlow is punctured by his account of the superiority of some women in spite of himself. The authorial voice is unequivocal about Marlow's chauvinistic views about women on certain occasions, such as a passing comment he makes during his stay at the Malabar House: "'[Now] and then a girl's laugh would be heard, as innocent and empty as her mind'" (*LJ*, 77). This general prejudice, evoked by the laughter of a European girl, is in sharp contrast to his portrayal of Oriental women such as Jewel, Stein's late Muslim wife and Doramin's wife. In his account of Stein's narrative about his "'dear wife the princess'" (*LJ*, 207), we

are presented a portrait of a woman who was feminine and loving, as well as martial in demeanour. In wartime she wore a revolver on her shoulder and could defend her person and property like any man:

> We were at war, and the country was not safe; my men were putting up bullet-proof shutters to the house and loading their rifles, and she begged me to have no fear for her. She could defend the house against anybody till I returned. And I laughed with pleasure a little. I liked to see her so brave and young and strong. I, too, was young then. At the gate she caught hold of my hand and gave it one squeeze and fell back. (*LJ*, 209)

As for Doramin's wife, although in public nobody has seen them exchange "'a single word'" (*LJ*, 259), it is "'generally believed that he consult[s] his wife as to public affairs'" (*LJ*, 259). These seemingly insignificant details, generally overlooked by critics more intent on pursuing deeper epistemological structures in the novel, serve to undermine hypostasized stereotypes about women and the other/Other. That we need to deconstruct national, racial and gender stereotypes in our age is a concern expressed by Laverne Nishihara (1996, 62) who contends that as contemporary readers of *Lord Jim*, we object to race and gender stereotyping because they rob members of groups of the complexity that makes them individuals. He submits that Conrad's achievement "is to complicate the handling of type so that the type [sic] character transcends the specified label" (1996, 62). In the interstices of Marlow's monolithic, masculinist narrative, emerge women whose exploits controvert the stereotypical generalizations about women that Marlow himself is guilty of, and constitute an antithetical response to the avowed heroism of male romantics such as Jim.

One of the most flagrant yet problematic instances of type-casting in the novel is Marlow's presentation of Dain Waris's character. The son of Doramin, and the *alter ego* of Jim, Dain was once responsible for saving Jim's life. Leading the

attack on Sherif Ali's stockade, "'Jim and Dain Waris [are] the first to lay their hands on the stakes'" (*LJ*, 270). When the rickety structure gives in, Jim goes head over heels into it, and if "'it hadn't been for Dain Waris, a pock-marked tattooed vagabond would have pinned him with his spear to a baulk of timber like one of Stein's beetles'" (*LJ*, 270). By Jim's own admission, Dain "'is the best friend [he] ever had'" (*LJ*, 260), barring Marlow of course. The bonding of Jim and Dain is "'one of those strange, profound, rare friendships between brown and white, in which the very difference of race seems to draw two human beings closer by some mystic element of sympathy'" (*LJ*, 261). To his people, Dain can fight like a white man, but what appeals to Marlow is that Dain also has a "'European mind'" (*LJ*, 262).

In Marlow's estimate, the "European mind" which singles out Dain from the motley rest of his kind is "'an unobscured vision, a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism'" (*LJ*, 262). If such racial profiling reveals Marlow's deep-seated prejudice and cultural ideology, then it also acts as a reminder that there are other "European minds" in the novel, in the likes of Chester and Gentleman Brown for whom the notion of "tenacity of purpose" has a totally different colouring, and to whom the nature of the term "altruism" is foreign. Against this, it might be argued that these two characters are perversions of the European ideal as envisaged by Marlow, but this would further bedevil the issue of racial stereotyping as no individual or group is the sole repository of vision, tenacity and altruism as this thesis advances. Complementing the mental qualities that recommend Dain to Marlow, are his proud carriage and polished bearing, traits which again are culturally and subjectively construed.

Later in Marlow's narrative we are told about Jim's "racial prestige" (*LJ*, 361), which Dain does not possess. Referring to this context, Jeremy Hawthorn says that Marlow's concern with Jim is "coloured with [sic] this feeling of racial and ideological solidarity" (1979, 42). What the full context of Marlow's remark about Jim's "racial prestige" reveals however, is that this sentiment cannot be attributed

to Marlow alone as Hawthorn implies. It is a construction of both Marlow as well as Dain's own people. When Dain decides to engage Brown's men during the absence of Jim, he is thwarted by his people because he did not have "'Jim's racial prestige and the reputation of invincible, supernatural power. He was not the visible, tangible incarnation of unfailing truth and of unfailing victory [. . .] Those unexpressed thoughts guided the opinions of the chief men of the town, who elected to assemble in Jim's fort [. . .]'" (*LJ*, 361). Ironically, in the eyes of the Malays, Jim personifies "visible" and "tangible" victory. Up to this point we have a complicated interweaving of identity construction by Marlow, who valorizes Dain for his "European mind", and the Malays who admire him for fighting like a white man even though he lacks Jim's "racial prestige". That the European settler is seen as the big, white bwana by natives, is a common stereotype of colonial romance literature. It is an image that is assiduously cultivated and protected as exemplified in George Orwell's well-known essay "Shooting an Elephant", where the white colonial officer puts on a brave appearance in front of the Burmese natives as a matter of patriotic duty (1961[1946], 15-23). To return to Dain Waris, despite his commendable qualities, he is still viewed by Marlow as the other/Other, as is affirmed in one of his most self-revealing statements: "'Beloved, trusted, and admired as he was, he was still one of *them*, while Jim was one of *us*'" [Marlow's emphases] (*LJ*, 361).

The construction of subjectivity in *Lord Jim* is implicated in Marlow's recurrent phrase "one of us". The first time it is mentioned is in the last sentence of the Author's Note in the Doubleday Edition (1920, ix), "[Jim] was one of us", and the last time it appears is in the penultimate paragraph of the novel as Marlow winds up his narrative of Jim's life in Patusan:

> But we can see him, an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with

> a shadowy ideal of conduct. Is he satisfied - quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one of us - and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy? Was I so very wrong after all? (*LJ*, 416)

Marlow's ambivalent questions testify to the lack of critical closure on the enigma of Jim's character and validate the poststructural and postmodern reading pursued by recent scholars such as Bruce Henricksen who claims: "The strategy of my reading, like that suggested by [Bette] London, is to reinsert Conrad's texts into the current conversation, which has as its most compelling imperative the need to rethink identity and knowledge from the perspective of our ruling discourses and grand narratives" (1992, 3). The certitude of Marlow's reading of Jim's character as being "one of us" is undermined by the statement that immediately precedes it: "We ought to know". But do we? And does Marlow, whom Steven Trout (1999, 278-279) refers to as "an upholder of European supremacy"?

Not unexpectedly, the refrain "one of us" has attracted its fair share of critical attention in almost every reading of the text. There has been consensus on Tanner's definition that it means "a western seaman [and] by extension, one of 'us', the readers" (1963, 13). Benita Parry subjects this phrase to a more rigorous interrogation, arguing that it is open to a number of constructions. While concurring with the idea that it suggests a membership of a "closed and elect group"(1983, 86), she goes on to suggest that the words take on a more portentous and precise ideological meaning (1983, 87). She proposes that the term connotes ethnic solidarity and "racial identification distinguishing the colonialists from the alien world of the other" (1983, 89). The two main strands of her argument are, firstly, that by confirming the worth of his own culture, Marlow is evoking the polarized structures of an inert East and a dynamic West; and secondly, the novel dramatizes a radical critique of imperialist ideology that is directed against a spiritually repressive culture demanding unreflective obedience

to the laws of order and progress (1983, 97). Parry's concluding sentence has implications for a postcolonial staging of the novel: "[The] fiction's vatic impulses are constrained to issue as illuminations of the human need to anticipate and possess the future, but without intimations of who the architects of the new age will be or what it is they are striving to construct" (1983, 98).

This aporetic conclusion of Benita Parry's essay on *Lord Jim* is an appropriate rejoinder to the enigma presented by Marlow's refrain, the text, and its eponymous hero or anti-hero (depending on one's construction of Jim's identity in the narrative at large) and his final action of surrender to Dain Waris's father. One might construe Jim as someone who conquers his destiny and atones for his offence as Baines does (1959, 252); or, one might see him as an unmitigated colonialist who "creates a sub-Britain in a remote corner of the world", as Boo Eung Koh (1996, 172) views him in an agonistic reading which the writer declares is "against the grain of Conrad criticism, and against the author Conrad himself" (1996, 177). A contrapuntal reading such as Koh's has value, but not when it conveniently ignores Cornelius's dishonesty and cupidity and elevates him to the status of "a naturalized Westerner in the native community who stands up to the Western colonial rule" (1996, 177). It would be too easy to fall into these two polarities of interpretation - the heroic one of Baines and the anti-heroic one proffered by Koh - but given the intricate texture of irony in the novel and the notoriously ambiguous nature of subjectivities in it, as instanced by the mysterious and sudden suicide of Captain Brierly (*LJ*, 58), the exemplar of maritime discipline and honour, there must be alternatives between these two positions as this chapter will propose presently.

A useful perspective on the refrain "one of us" has been offered by Scott McCracken (1993, 26), who proposes that it be regarded as a question rather than a statement. As *the* (my emphasis) ostensible question of the novel, it sheds doubt on the ideal of behaviour and superiority which goes with being "one of us". Extrapolating McCracken, the certitude of what it means to be "one of us", to have

an identity premised on ethnic, racial or national exclusivity, is diluted by the very doubts expressed by Marlow in the celebrated closing lines of the text: "'Is he satisfied - quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one of us - and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy? Was I so very wrong after all?'" (*LJ*, 416).

The rhetorical weight of the last question casts doubt on Marlow's smug assumption, "We ought to know". The point, in my view, is that for all his complacency, Marlow himself has doubts about his ideology of race, conduct and cultural identity. This impression is reinforced as the narrative winds to a conclusion and there are ironic resonances of images orchestrated proleptically earlier in the text. The sentence which precedes the doubts voiced by Marlow in the previous paragraph, repeats the image of opportunity sitting next to Jim like a veiled Eastern bride as he enters Patusan (*LJ*, 244). Marlow reflects that in the brief moment before his death Jim might have glimpsed the bride. The second image which resonates is that of "shadowy ideal of conduct" (*LJ*, 416). On page 244, Marlow had referred to Jim as the "heir of a shadowy and mighty tradition". The oxymoron in shadowy/ideal and shadowy/mighty, apart from being a self-reflexive criticism of the grandiose ambitions of empire and its code of conduct, complicates neat categorizations of "us" and "them" and what constitutes a gentleman and what constitutes a villain.

Just as "[a]ll Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (*Y*, 117), all of the British empire has shaped Jim, the "conqueror of fame" with his "exalted" sense of "egoism". It must be remembered that Jim once confided in Marlow because he saw them both as gentlemen: "'Of course I wouldn't have talked to you about all this if you had not been a gentleman. I ought to have known [. . .] I am - a gentleman, too [. . .]'" (*LJ*, 131). Ironically, Brown is also a "gentleman", and he even claims such kinship with Jim: "'And there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience [. . .] of a secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts'"

(*LJ*, 387). The irony is heightened when one considers that the bond of blood or race to which Brown appeals, and which subsequently influences Jim to allow him a safe passage, leads to Jim's own destruction. To some degree, in terms of Marlow's valorization, Brown would qualify to be a member of the circle of "one of us", but Dain Waris, who saves Jim's life, would be excluded from it and still remain "one of them".

Terry Collits (1994, 66) has asserted that skin both identifies and masks and in the Eurocentric world, where skin-colour carries an automatic cultural content, it also masks true identity. Collits adds: "The frustrated desire to make skin-colour *identify* (which is racism) was a linchpin of colonial authority, sustaining the cohesiveness of the ruling group, those included by Conrad's insistent phrase, 'One of us'" (1994, 66). Clearly, Jim cannot belong to the exclusive clique posited by Marlow. His actions in the novel do not square with the claim that he creates a mini-British empire in Patusan as Boo Eung Koh professes. Tom Henthorne (2000, 212) insists that Jim's attitude, attire and lifestyle make it clear that he has not "gone native". While this is true to some extent, one cannot ignore the fact that he does enjoy a relationship with Jewel who becomes his common-law wife, and he does become a benevolent despot to the people of Patusan. Moreover, his bonding with Dain Waris accounts substantially for what Nico Israel (2000, 70) terms an "act of cultural and ethnic transmogrification". That he has no desire to return to England, even though he dresses like a colonial to the end, sets Jim apart from the "boys' club". To adapt the words of Homi Bhabha, he is "almost the same, but not quite" (1994, 86). An almost insignificant detail, which seems to have eluded commentators, is that Jim removes his signature hat before he confronts Doramin: "He was fully dressed as for every day, but without a hat" (*LJ*, 413). This gesture of removing his hat, a striking symbol of his colonial otherness in an alien society, is performative of a new identity in the making. He occupies a space of hybridity, being neither "us" nor "them", but in-between. In a brief aside on *Lord Jim*, Homi Bhabha (1994, 174) has pointedly remarked that the statement

"He was one of us" is a major trope of social and psychic identification throughout the text, the repetition of which reveals the fragile margins of Western civility and cultural community put under colonial stress. To quote Bhabha directly:

> Such a discursive ambivalence at the very heart of the issue of honour and duty in the colonial service represents the liminality, if not the end, of the `masculinist, heroic ideal (and ideology) of a healthy imperial Englishness - those pink bits on the map that Conrad believed were genuinely salvaged by being the preserve of English colonization, which served the larger idea, the ideal, of Western society. (1994, 174)

The latter part of Bhabha's comment suggests that he conflates Marlow with Conrad, especially in *Heart of Darkness* where the young Marlow confesses to a fascination with the red, green, blue, orange and purple patches on the map of the world (*Y*, 55). Jim occupies the threshold of the British enterprise, the point that Bhabha (1994, 4) refers theoretically to as "liminality", a point that is neither here nor there but rather in the space of the "third" dimension where Jim eludes the exclusive circle proposed by Marlow's obsessive refrain. If Jim is a failure in Patusan, as several critics have chorused, then this perceived failure is due to his inability to reconcile fully the ideological claims engendered by his national, racial and cultural alignments, with the contingencies of a different world. It is significant that Jim dies in an Oriental world which is predominantly Islamic. Fredric Jameson (1981, 246) has observed in a footnote that the thematic selection of Islam is no historical accident as it represents the historical and cultural Other. Perhaps no other modern scholar has pursued this argument with more passion and vigour than the recently-deceased Edward Said in his treatise *Orientalism* (1978). As observed in Chapter Three of this study (p. 95), Ania Loomba has also stated that in medieval and early Europe, Islam functioned as the predominant binary of and threat to Christianity. When the eight hundred Muslim pilgrims

board the *Patna*, they place their lives in the hands of Europeans, "trusting the power of their unbelief" (*LJ*, 17). It is ironically retributive that Jim, having unwittingly betrayed his friend Dain Waris and others who are killed by Brown's crew, should die at the hands of a believer, Doramin, the Malay.

Sung Ryol Kim (2001, 100) has claimed that Jim's end is not simply a tragic outcome but a return to identity, as the trial had presupposed his wrong identity [sic]. Contrary to Kim, and consonant with Jameson's view that *Lord Jim* can be read as a postmodernist text (1981, 219), a case could be made for Jim's new identity - a "post-identity" which sees Jim not as someone returning to his British seaman's shadowy ideal of conduct, but as a hybrid, postcolonial construct occupying a space of liminality. My concept of a "post-identity" derives from the term "post-theory" which is defined by Fernando de Toro (1999, 20) as a "transitory space" that is "not here/there, but both", and by Barry Rutland (1999, 72) as the "limits of theory and the surpassing of those limits". By postulating the term "post-identity" in respect of Jim's personality, I hope to conjoin the notion of ambivalence with a postmodern identity that is unstable and in transition, neither here nor there; in other words, an identity that is the other of "originary and initial subjectivities" (Bhabha 1994, 1).

Not unlike Shakespeare's highly imaginative and troubled Prince Hamlet, Tuan Jim continues to tantalize contemporary readers who would recall Stein's conundrum of "'How to be'" (*LJ*, 213). Stein's tentative answer to this existential riddle confronting humans is: "'He wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil - and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow - so fine as he can never be . . . In a dream . . . '" (*LJ*, 213). Convinced that Jim is a romantic, Stein is not even sure if this is a good thing: "'He is romantic - romantic,' he repeated. 'And that is very bad - very bad . . . Very good, too,' he added'" (*LJ*, 216). Marlow's response to Stein is "'But *is he*?'" Jakob Lothe (1989, 171) writes that the harder Marlow attempts to understand Jim, the more enigmatic Jim appears. Hence, the more often Marlow insists on Jim's being "one of us", the

deeper grows his scepticism which according to Lothe, "furthers also a radical change in Marlow's existential orientation, epistemology, and personal convictions" (171). Obversely, it was argued a long time ago by Douglas Hewitt that while we look to Marlow for clarifying the moral issues, his "reflections only succeed in making them more confused" (1969[1968], 34). However doubtful Marlow may appear to be about Jim's romantic imagination, which the frame narrator tells us is the "enemy of men" (*LJ*, 11), the authorial (Conrad's) endorsement defers to Jim's life of the imagination, "'to the claim of his own world of shades'" (*LJ*, 416) in which he is neither hero nor anti-hero but in-between, in a third space of liminalty which offers the possibility of transcendence to another plane of existence which makes him neither "one of us" nor "one of them". Jim re-inscribes his own identity, shaped by the two worlds he has known, emblematized by the *Patna* and Patusan. By his own agency he ruptures the exclusive circle designated as "one of us" and escapes Marlow's appropriative urge, which in its unedifying moments prompts him to stereotype animal behaviour along racist lines of "us" and "them" as he does just before Jim confronts him for allegedly referring to him as a "wretched cur" (*LJ*, 70): "'Anyhow, a dog was there, weaving himself in and out amongst people's legs in that mute stealthy way native dogs have'"(*LJ*, 70).

III.

Lloyd Fernando (1990[1976], 70) submits that Conrad conceived and completed two-thirds of *The Rescue* within three years of the start of his literary career. In a letter to E. L. Sanderson, dated 28 March 1896, Conrad wrote: "I am going to work. The title of the new tale will be: *The Rescuer: A Tale of Narrow Waters*" (Karl and Davies 1983, 270). In his *Author's Note* to the Dent Collected Edition Conrad says that he laid aside the draft of the novel at the end of the summer of 1898, and precisely twenty years later, at the end of the summer of

1918, he took it up again (Author's Note 1949, vii). What materialized was titled *The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows* (1920).

Like *Lord Jim*, which was published in 1900, the novel derives its thematic aura from the central figure of a British adventurer in the person of Tom Lingard. While the plot, no less convoluted and fractured than that of *Lord Jim*, gains its impetus from the kidnapping of Mr. Travers and Mr. d'Alcacer by Sheriff Daman who hopes to secure Lingard's armed brig, the *Emma,* it is complicated by Lingard's highly-wrought and problematic courtship of Mrs. Travers and his relationship with the Malay prince Hassim and his sister Immada. In the interstices of the main plot, the novel stages a general critique of empire and humanity, showing how people of different races and cultures meet, clash and engage with one another on the frontiers of the colonial enterprise. Specifically, it shares with *Lord Jim* the nuanced trope of betrayal involving, principally, the protagonist Lingard as well as Edith Travers, who, through a critical error of judgement fails to hand over Hassim's ring to Lingard, which would have apprised him of Hassim and Immada's captivity. Fearing that Jörgenson, who had asked her to deliver the ring to Lingard, is trying to draw the latter away from her husband and d'Alcacer, whose freedom from captivity depends on Lingard, Mrs. Travers conceals the ring from Lingard (*TR*, 386-387). This misjudgement delays any action Lingard could have taken to rescue Hassim and Immada who are the hostages of Tengga on board the *Emma*, and leads to the death of everyone on board when the suicidal and incendiary Jörgenson blows up the vessel in a moment of panic brought about by his perceived betrayal by Lingard (*TR,* 442). The burden of guilt that a white man has to bear for the so-called betrayal of his Malay friends through a set of choices, a theme highly reminiscent of *Lord Jim*, is replicated in *The Rescue*: "Carter gave all his naïve sympathy to that man who had certainly rescued the white people but seemed to have lost his own soul in the attempt" (*TR*, 453).

In an alternate but no less resonant key is the orchestration of the motif of the

ring which acts as a potent symbol of trust in both texts. In *Lord Jim* it is given to Jim by Stein as a seal of his friendship with Doramin (the owner of the ring) and as a passport to Patusan. At the end of the story, before Jim is executed by Doramin, the ring portentously falls out of Doramin's hand and rolls towards Jim's feet. In *The Rescue* the ring functions as a guarantor of Hassim's faith in Lingard's friendship but it fails to reach Lingard owing to the suspicions of Mrs. Travers. As alluded to in the discussion on "Karain" in Chapter Two (p. 32), amulets and charms, including rings, play an important subsidiary role in affirming the commonality of human faith in objects and fetishes, defying and deconstructing boundaries of culture, religion and race. But objects and fetishes have significance only in so far as people attach any meaning to them. Outside the sphere of such meaning, they are rendered useless. Just as the ring falls out of Doramin's hand thus prefiguring the end of Jim's life in Patusan, Hassim's ring, "[a] dead talisman" (*TR*, 467), is flung overboard by Mrs. Travers after the death of Hassim and Immada. Forgiving her, Lingard persists, "Haven't you understood long ago that if you had given me that ring it would have been just the same?" (*TR*, 465). This question, or confession rather, testifies to the hopelessness of Hassim and Immada's fate right from the outset and points to Lingard's moral guilt at having betrayed his Malay friends because of his promise to Mrs. Travers to rescue her husband and d'Alcacer. Given this intertextual weft between *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue*, it is no accident that Virginia Woolf, as mentioned early in this chapter, discerns in *The Rescue* an attempt by Conrad to rewrite *Lord Jim*.

Yet another interesting similarity between Jim and Lingard is the fact that both are accorded honorifics by their Malay counterparts in recognition of their "superior strength, if not their superior virtue", to borrow freely from the third epigraph to this chapter. To Hassim, Lingard declares, "My country is upon a far-away sea [. . .] but here, which is also my country [. . .] I am powerful enough. In fact, I am Rajah here. This bit of my country is all my own" (*TR*, 75). Availing oneself of intertextual licence, one might go to *An Outcast of the Islands* for a

fuller account of the growth of Lingard's reputation and how he came to be known as "Rajah Laut, the King of the Seas" (*OI*, 14):

> Tom Lingard was a master, a lover, a servant of the sea. The sea took him young, fashioned him body and soul; gave him his fierce aspect, his loud voice, his fierce eyes, his stupidly guileless heart. Tom Lingard grew rich on the sea and by the sea [. . .] he soon became known to the Malays, and by his successful recklessness in several encounters with pirates, established the terror of his name. (*OI*, 13-14)

This retrospective description of Lingard, taken from an earlier text, is congruent with Lingard's personality in *The Rescue*. As Albert Guerard (1958, 68) notes, the Malay trilogy is composed in reverse chronological order, beginning with *Almayer's Folly*, then followed by *An Outcast of the Islands* and *The Rescue*. The Lingard we come across in *The Rescue* is a very much younger man, "of about thirty-five, erect and supple" (*TR*, 9).

It is acknowledged in Conradian studies that the character of Lord Jim is modelled on that of James Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak from 1803 to 1868 (Berthoud 2002, 307). The affinities between them are such that the publishers of the Oxford World's Classics, edited by Jacques Berthoud, feature the portrait of Brooke by Sir Francis Grant on the cover of their title *Lord Jim*. Avrom Fleishman (1967, 100), describing Brooke as a "seaman-trader", offers a concise account of his career in the Malay Archipelago where "he energetically pursued the twin goals of colonial development and private gain [. . .] in the perpetual jockeying for power with native rivals" (1967, 101). Tom Lingard, who also belongs to "the common crowd of seaman-traders of the Archipelago" (*TR*, 4) is, according to Fleishman, "of the Brooke mold [sic] not only in the romantic verve of his adventurousness but in the mock-heroic aspect of his character [. . .] He is racked by the same guilt feelings that pursue Brooke after his failure to save

Budrudeen, Hassim, and their sister" (1967, 104). While Fleishman's comparison of Lingard with Brooke is apt, his epithet "mock-heroic" is problematic. Like Jim, Lingard might invite the description "anti-heroic" on occasion, but even then such a qualification would require the utmost circumspection when applied to Lingard. Apart from his seemingly egoistic tendency to refer to himself as Rajah Laut or King Tom, appellations accorded him by the Malays themselves (*TR*, 323), there is no doubting his courage which may border on the reckless and the lawless but never the burlesque or mock-heroic as implied by Fleishman. His derring-do is legendary on the high seas of the Archipelago, and like Jim, he does not habitually carry a firearm as we witness when he is engaged in a skirmish just prior to his rescue by, and meeting with, Hassim: "Lingard was unarmed. To the end of his life he remained incorrigibly reckless in that respect, explaining that he was 'much too quick tempered to carry firearms on the chance of a row'" (*TR*, 70).

Lingard's moral quandary derives from his desire to help reinstate his trusting friends Hassim and Immada to their rightful place as the rulers of the Wajo tribe, and the urgency to secure the release of the two white men who have been kidnapped. He does not relish the latter obligation which has been thrust upon him when the yacht of the Europeans is found stranded in the shallows. To this effect, he tells Captain Carter: "Your yacht has gone ashore in a most inconvenient place - for me; and with your boats sent off here and there, you would bring every infernal gunboat buzzing to a spot that was as quiet and retired as the heart of a man could wish" (*TR*, 37-38). Their blundering into this "hornet's nest" (*TR*, 38) has complicated his life as an adventurer and dealer in contraband, as well as his relationship with the local tribes with whom he has tried to maintain a delicate balance of power in order to win support for Hassim who becomes his devoted friend after he saves Lingard from an attack by tribesmen. This obligation to return a favour to friends whom he regards as his children (even if Immada, like the young Mrs. Almayer, might have fantasies about him as a lover), speaks of both affection and gratitude: "They were Lingard's heart's friends. They were like

his children" (*TR*, 330). Several critics of the novel, in their enthusiasm to portray Immada as the sexual rival of Mrs. Travers, tend to overlook Lingard's paternal attitude to Immada. Benita Parry, for example, speaks of the two women competing for Lingard's love and loyalty (1983, 47), while Robert Hampson, who recognizes that Lingard treats Immada as "a daughter" (2000, 164), nevertheless insists on saying that the "reconfiguration of Lingard's desire leads to the marginalization of Immada" (2000, 164), and much later, that Mrs. Travers' cross-dressing in Malay clothes "signals her victory over Immada" (2000, 180). Even Mrs. Travers views Immada as a rival until Lingard puts paid to this impression early in their courtship: "'You love her,' she said softly. 'Like my own daughter,' he cried, low" (*TR*, 158).

Lingard's moral predicament, echoed by Stein's exclamation, "'How to be!'" (*LJ*, 213), prompts the question of what it means to be, to exist in a moral universe of conflicting loyalties and demands. This dimension of existence is crucially relevant to the question of identity and in *The Rescue* this question is related to the idea of what it means to be a gentleman. Jeremy Hawthorn, reiterating Tony Tanner, points out that the word "gentleman" recurs with constant regularity in Conrad's work (1990, 87-88). However, the word is not entirely unproblematic in its usage. Hawthorn argues that Conrad uses cultural clashes and contrasts to subject the term to pressure and scrutiny (1990, 90). Pursuing this argument, Hawthorn avers that the word "gentleman" is never used in any unqualified way to describe a Malay, which would suggest that it is a term that has a racist dimension as well. From Hawthorn's reasoning one may infer that Marlow's famous refrain, "one of us" also embraces the notion of a "gentleman" which in turn acts as a signifier of an exclusive racial grouping.

In *The Rescue*, "the semantics of the word gentleman", to borrow Hawthorn's phraseology (1990, 96), comes under scrutiny and interrogation. The first time Lingard has to defend to Mrs. Travers his decision to stop one of their boats from going to seek assistance, he explains to her how this would have exposed them

to the likes of Belarab, Daman, Tengga and Ningrat, each one of whom "has a heavy score to settle with the whites" (*TR*, 164). Assuming that she, like her husband, doubts his motives, he utters:

> 'I suppose I don't look enough of a gentleman [. . .] Yet I know what a gentleman is. I lived with them for years. I chummed with them - yes - on goldfields and in other places where a man has got to show the stuff that's in him [. . .] And I know what a gentleman would do. Come! Wouldn't he treat a stranger fairly? Wouldn't he remember that no man is a liar till you prove him so? Wouldn't he keep his word wherever given? Well, I am going to do that. Not a hair of your head shall be touched as long as I live!' (*TR*, 164)

Apart from touching on the eternal theme of the deceptive nature of appearances, Lingard's outburst is an implicit criticism of Mrs. Travers' husband who has pretensions to being superior to Lingard (and d'Alcacer) but who has already demonstrated that not only is he the exact opposite of what a gentleman should be, but also an irredeemable snob and a virulent racist. Not only does he treat Lingard with contempt, but orders him off his yacht (*TR*, 132) and asks him to take Hassim and Immada away even though he knows they are of royal blood: "'Oblige me by taking these natives away'" (*TR*, 143). Schooled in the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest, he finds "inferior" races quite expendable: "'And if the inferior race must perish, it is a gain, a step toward the perfecting of society which is the aim of progress'" (*TR*, 148). His racist theory extends even to d'Alcacer, whose company he enjoys but whom he regards as inferior because he does not react to their kidnapping the way Travers does: "'He is a mere Spaniard. He takes this farcical conspiracy with perfect nonchalance. Decayed races have their own philosophy'" (*TR*, 271). While he acknowledges d'Alcacer's "undoubted nobility" (*TR*, 126), he regards him as a man of "inferior principles" (*TR*, 126). Travers'

attitude towards non-Anglo-Saxons such as d'Alcacer is in accord with the archaeology of racist theory sketched by historian Ronald Hyam who asserts that the Victorian hierarchy of racist ideology placed Latin nations well below the Americans, Germans, and the Roman Catholic French (1976, 39).

Contrary to what Travers thinks of d'Alcacer, compared to Travers the latter is a paragon of what a gentleman should be. D'Alcacer is an aristocrat, whose uncle is a Governor-General of a colony (*TR*, 123). An astute judge of character and a philosopher, he makes an equable travelling companion for Mrs. Travers who takes him into her confidence. It is on his cryptic suggestion that she withholds Hassim's ring from Lingard, but d'Alcacer is not culpable of misjudgement because Mrs. Travers is not explicit about what she has on her person. Her own conversation with him is quite oblique, at the end of which he opines, "'[. . .] yes, if I were in your place I think I would suppress anything I could not understand'" (*TR*, 407). D'Alcacer, who cannot understand why she married an incompatible partner like Mr. Travers, surmises that it must have been from ambition (*TR*, 123). His own view of Mr. Travers is that he is a man who is "ignorant of human passion [and] devoted to exacting the greatest possible amount of personal advantage from human institutions" (*TR*, 123). This is a damning indictment of a man who adopts a supercilious attitude to d'Alcacer, Lingard and even his own wife, as will be touched on in due course.

The omniscient narrator, who is more objective than Marlow is in *Lord Jim*, informs us that though d'Alcacer had a natural aversion to being murdered "obscurely by ferocious Moors" (*TR*, 408), he was a "civilized man [who] had no illusions about civilization" (*TR*, 408). Idiosyncratically, d'Alcacer refers to the Malays as "Moors" and to Lingard as the "Man of Fate" (*TR*, 404). If d'Alcacer proves to be a thorough gentleman, which he is, then Mr. Travers remains, till the end, an ungracious, obnoxious cad. He has always suspected Lingard of engineering the kidnapping of d'Alcacer and himself. He even goes so far as to blame Lingard for convincing his wife about the kidnapping which he regards as

a conspiracy: "'The influence that bandit has got over her is incredible" (*TR*, 351). D'Alcacer is the complete antithesis of this opinionated man, and the narrator's eloquent testimony to his virtues as a gentleman merits more than a paraphrase:

> Without being humorous he was a good-humoured man [. . .] More of a European than of a Spaniard he had that truly aristocratic nature which is inclined to credit every honest man with something of its own nobility and in its judgment is altogether independent of class feeling. He believed Lingard to be an honest man and he never troubled his head to classify him, except in the sense that he found him an interesting character. (*TR*, 309)

In this context we also learn that d'Alcacer does not regard Lingard as a "type" but as a "specimen to be judged only by its own worth" (*TR*, 309). It redounds to his abiding credit that he is able to see people as they are and not as stereotypes who need to be classified as is so often the case when one is confronted with the "other", a tendency Conrad is constantly challenging in his fiction.

Tom Lingard, as d'Alcacer opines, should be judged on his own recognizances. As Mrs. Travers begins to understand the strange Lingard, as she is slowly "invaded by this masterful figure" (*TR*, 215), she discerns the real person behind the rough seaman-trader:

> He was not mediocre. Whatever he might have been he was not mediocre. The glamour of a lawless life stretched over him like the sky over the sea down on all sides to an unbroken horizon. Within, he moved very lonely, dangerous and romantic. There was in him crime, sacrifice, tenderness, devotion, and the madness of a fixed idea. She thought with wonder that of all the men in the world he was indeed the one she knew the best and yet she could not foresee the speech or the act of the next

minute. (*TR*, 215)

Mrs. Travers' perception of Lingard's colourful but complex character is an index to his virtues as a gentleman which endear him to his friends, as well as his major flaw which leads to his much-vaunted betrayal, namely, the madness of a fixed idea. It is Lingard's obsession with an idea that forms the intertextual link in all three of the early Malayan novels generally referred to as the Lingard trilogy.

Much has been written about Lingard's apparent betrayal of Hassim and Immada, who represent the other/Other, as well as his intrusion in Malayan affairs. Avrom Fleishman (1967, 89), for example, states that Lingard feels an inherited complex of ties to the Europeans even before the bond of his love for Mrs. Travers, and these prove stronger than his obligations to the natives. Further, he sees the kind of intervention by whites such as Lingard as doing "the natives no good and under[mining] the morality of the whites" (1967, 89). Similarly, Benita Parry observes that the "mystique of the chivalrous and disinterested adventurer is stripped away, leaving the more ambiguous figure of a maverick and dreamer motivated by altruism and self-interest, compassion and egoism [who] succeed[s] in disrupting an existing community" (1983, 45). Parry's critique of the novel brings out the nuances in Lingard's extraordinary personality. She views his conflict as arising from his fidelity to a commitment given to his "Malayan clients" (1983, 45), and his socially ordained obligations to persons of his own race who are also his class enemies. She comments acidly that Lingard comes "to serve his masters and abandon his dependants" (1983, 45).

It would be difficult to fault much, if any, of Parry's incisive postcolonial critique of the novel in which she sees obvious merit as an anti-colonial document. For valorizing the text and devoting an entire chapter to it, she has invoked the disapproval of Goonetilleke (1990, 39) who regards *The Rescue* as "too much of a romance" and Parry's project as "an example of the kind of fallacious justification that besets the criticism of weak works". While Parry's endeavour is

far from a fallacious justification of the text, there are several aspects of her criticism which invite close scrutiny. Firstly, Lingard might appear guilty of procrastination in the matter of the succession of Hassim and Immada as the latter accusingly reminds him on the Travers' grounded yacht: "'You never looked for us. Never, never once'" (*TR*, 137). But this in not the compete picture as the omniscient narrator records earlier in the text: "For two years Lingard had thrown himself body and soul into the great enterprise, had lived in the long intoxication of slowly preparing success [. . .] Money was wanted and men were wanted, and he had enough of both in two years [. . .]" (*TR*, 106). Secondly, while he pursues his own interests in the Archipelago, nobody can accuse him of racism or partiality to a member of his own race. If he does proclaim his whiteness, as he does to Carter, it is in the context of his identity-for-self, as he conceives of his task as a gentleman: "'I am a white man inside and out; I won't let inoffensive people - and a woman, too - come to harm if I can help it [. . .] I am like any other man that is worth his salt'" (*TR*, 39). If this verbal commitment sounds like partiality to people of his own race, then it is no more partial or fervent than his word to his Malay friends: "'If ever you and Immada need help at once and I am within reach, send me a message with this ring and if I am alive I will not fail you'" (*TR*, 93). It is this instinct to act on his gentleman's impulse that drives him to rescue Hassim and his sister as well as their men and bring them all aboard his brig. Having rescued them once, Lingard feels a deep sense of responsibility towards them as he tells Jörgenson: "'When you save people from death you take a share in their life'" (*TR*, 102). Nowhere in the text of *The Rescue* is Lingard shown to compromise his integrity on human equality, irrespective of race, class or gender. Thirdly, it is ungenerous of Parry to suggest that Lingard capitulates to his "masters and abandon[s] his dependants". He may be a slave to his passion for Emma Travers but he is at other times a master of himself who serves nobody except his own instincts. Finally, for critics to stress that Lingard, *à la* James Brooke, is an agent of destabilization in the lives of the natives is to ignore the fact that skirmishes

were endemic in this community even before Lingard's arrival and that Hassim and Immada are rescued by Lingard after an uprising instigated in the first place by their own relatives.

In fairness to Benita Parry it must be stressed that her portrait of Lingard is a hybrid one, based on both "The Rescuer", the manuscript version, and the published text. Thomas Moser has drawn attention to some of the significant differences between the manuscript version of "The Rescuer" and the published text, *The Rescue*, twenty years later. In Moser's view, while the Lingard of the 1890s is a worthy forerunner of the intense, guilt-haunted Jim and Razumov, the Lingard of the second half of *The Rescue* is "utterly debilitated" (1966[1957], 150). What Moser means by "debilitated" is that the complex, egoistic character of the Lingard envisaged in the manuscript version had become, in the published version, "a conventional hero of popular fiction, a generous, brave, inherently good man brought low by bad luck, human misunderstanding, and the machinations of fate" (1966[1957], 150). Moser's argument is consistent with his theory of Conrad's "achievement and decline" - words which form the sub-title of his well-known treatise, in terms of which he prefers the earlier "egotistic, meddlesome" (1966[1957], 150) Lingard to the latter character whom he portrays as effete.

Robert Hampson, whose 1992 full-length study is based entirely on the manuscript version of "The Rescuer", comments: "Where Willems betrayed his white allies for love of a brown woman, Lingard contemplates betraying his brown allies for love of a white woman" (1992, 92). It would seem to me that Lingard's contemplation has little or nothing to do with brown or white people; rather it is a conflict between passion and duty, which Hampson himself acknowledges in the penultimate paragraph of his critique on "The Rescuer": "Lingard had to choose between his identity-for-self (an heroic, romantic self-image that is associated with his bond with Hassim and Immada) and this passionate impulse towards Mrs. Travers" (1992, 99). The trope of betrayal (central to Hampson's project which is titled *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity*) is crucial to the thematic structure of

The Rescue, which pivots on a series of betrayals. It is important, therefore, to establish who betrays whom, or what. In his book-length study of 2000 , Hampson pursues the theme of Lingard's betrayal, this time based on the published version of *The Rescue*. To support his argument, Hampson inadvertently misquotes from the text when he asserts that even Hassim's "loyalty was shaken" (2000, 163). Though Hassim is doubtful of the outcome of Lingard's attempt to rescue the Europeans, his "loyalty [to Lingard] was *unshaken* [my emphasis]" (*TR*, 221). The force of Hampson's anti-colonial critique, which acknowledges Parry's reading based on both versions of the text, is crucial to the representation or misrepresentation of the Lingard of the published version of *The Rescue*, whose so-called betrayal is due to a concatenation of events over which he has no control. The entire episode after the kidnapping of Travers and d'Alcacer, involving the protracted negotiations with the Malays, is part of the process of Lingard's attempt to assist Hassim and Immada find allies in the likes of Tengga and Daman in their fight for their rightful succession: "[Lingard] had no means of action but force which he dared not use since it would mean the destruction of his plans and the downfall of his hopes; and worse still would wear an aspect of treachery to Hassim and Immada" (*TR*, 281). Lingard's delicate manoeuvring of the situation is ruined when Carter, who is in charge of Lingard's brig, the *Lightning,* fires on the pirates in a moment of tactical indiscretion as he reveals in his letter to Lingard (*TR*, 327). This action precipitates the tragedy in which Hassim, Immada, and their captors on the *Emma* are killed when Jörgenson, thinking that Lingard has betrayed him by ignoring Hassim's ring, blows up the vessel. It is Mrs. Travers who has unwittingly betrayed Jörgenson as well as Hassim and Immada by not handing the ring to Lingard. If by this argument Lingard is exonerated of the charge of betrayal and rendered into a hapless victim of circumstances, then this conception of his identity would seem to concur with Moser's view of the later, debilitated Lingard. But such a view detracts from the person of Lingard who emerges no less egoistic, romantic, or

morally perplexed as Moser makes him out to be.

Lingard is presented as a foil to characters such as Shaw his chief mate on the *Lightning* and Mr. Travers, both unmitigated racists. The opening chapter of Part 1, which introduces Shaw, Lingard, and a few minor Malay crewmen, immediately announces the issues of racial chauvinism and attitudes to the Other. Shaw, "a white man of low stature, thick-set with shaven cheeks" (*TR*, 6), is an arrogant bully and an incompetent seaman. Looking at the Malay helmsman "with disgust" (*TR*, 7), he commands, "'Shift the helm back again. Don't you feel the air from aft? You are a dummy standing there'" (*TR*, 8). The Malay obeys but it is a "disdainful obedience" (*TR*, 8) because there is no wind and the Malay knows this. Shaw, we are told, felt "himself immeasurably superior to the Malay seamen whom he had to handle, and treated them with lofty toleration" (*TR*, 12). When Lingard asks Shaw if there is anyone out there, his chief mate looks out through his long glass and replies with authority, "'Nothing in sight, sir'" (*TR*, 15). But there is a boat out there as the Malay seacannie insists to the helmsman who has also seen it. The helmsman responds, "'Am I a fat white man? [. . .] I was a man of the sea before you were born, O Sali! The order is to keep silence and mind the rudder, lest evil befall the ship'" (*TR*, 16). The fat white man alluded to is, of course, Shaw whose putative authority as first mate and Lingard's racial kindred is no guarantor of his vaunted experience and avowed superiority over the Malays. This short opening chapter is significant not only for the way in which it represents Shaw and those whom he regards as his inferior others, but also for the voicing of the others who in turn regard him as the inferior "other" of themselves. Long before critics such as Chinua Achebe, Marianna Torgovnick and Padmini Mongia alleged that Conrad was denying a voice to the native other, his novels, as this thesis consistently maintains, were proleptically gesturing towards a postcolonial critique of what it means to be, to exist in a world of alterities.

The second chapter of Part 1 both extends the theme of racism as embedded in Shaw's psyche as well as introduces the reader to the sensitive issue of cultural

engagements with the other. When Lingard relates a seemingly unimportant incident of many years ago when a Balinese girl who tossed a red blossom at a French officer was condemned to death by the Rajah because she belonged to his nephew, Shaw's reaction is predictable: "'Would those savages kill a woman for that?'" (*TR*, 21). Lingard's response is, "'Aye! They are pretty moral there'", followed by the comment "'they were that blamed respectable'" (*TR*, 21). Although Lingard does not approve of this honour killing, as he was prepared to go to war with the locals at that time, his cultural sensitivity precludes him from making the kind of crass, judgemental remark typical of Shaw. Still on the theme of women being "the cause of a lot of trouble" as Shaw chauvinistically terms it, the conversation shifts to the legendary war between the Greeks and the Trojans over Helen of Troy. It is Shaw who introduces this episode, but amusingly refers to the combatants as "Them Greeks and Turks" (*TR*, 22). Shaw ironically regards them as "unenlightened in those old days" (*TR*, 22) for fighting over a woman. Shaw's gross ignorance of Greek mythology goes hand-in-hand with his racism. Disapproving of wars fought over women as being unenlightened, he would accept them if they were "with Chinamen, or niggers, or such people as must be kept in order and won't listen to reason; having not sense enough to know what's good for them, when it's explained to them by their betters - missionaries, and such like au-tho-ri-ties'" (*TR*, 22). Shaw is relieved that "'[t]hose pagan times will never come back, thank God'" (*TR*, 23). Further into their conversation, Shaw tells Lingard he "'could fight as well as any of them flat-nosed chaps we have to make shift with, instead of a proper crew of decent Christians'" (*TR*, 24). If Shaw's racist and patronizing tone towards the other seems to be presented in Dickensian caricature, it serves to underscore the prevailing attitude of racist bigots like him towards people of other times, races and physiognomy. If Shaw's rampant racism seems confined to someone of a lowly class, then it is no less so even in someone of a higher social rank as observed, for example, in Travers.

Lingard's cultural sensitivity is evident on other occasions in the novel. When

Hassim and Immada board the Travers' yacht, Lingard, sensing that Mrs. Travers is fascinated with the exotic beauty of Immada, warns her not to touch her (*TR*, 140), as he later explains that she is a princess (*TR*, 142). Mrs. Travers (and d'Alcacer) accept the royal status of the siblings, but not Travers, to whom they are just "natives" (*TR*, 143). Later in the narrative when Mrs. Travers insists on going ashore with Lingard to negotiate with the Malay chieftains, he offers her a Malay woman's garment. Instructing her to cover her head with a silk scarf intended for Immada, he explains: "'We are going amongst a lot of Mohammedans'" (*TR*, 288). Mrs. Travers' playful rejoinder is, "'You want me to look respectable'" (*TR*, 288). Before they meet Daman, Lingard advises her that should Daman offer to shake her hand she should offer her own covered with the end of her scarf. Mrs. Travers then asks, "'Why? [. . .] Propriety?'" (*TR*, 293). The narrator records that she felt "extremely Oriental herself" (*TR*, 293) when encountering Daman.

Robert Hampson, in consonance with Benita Parry, has interpreted Mrs. Travers' change of costume, which he refers to as "cross-dressing", as an act of appropriation "through aestheticising the Other and then appropriating an aestheticised version of the Other through role-playing" (2000, 180). Earlier in this critique Hampson states that "for the purposes of this encounter with the Malays, Mrs. Travers has changed from European to Malay clothes" (2000, 179). As already indicated, Mrs. Travers changes her clothes on Lingard's insistence. Citing Simon During's construct of "self-othering", which During defines as a "means for constructing or finding a self as another or by identification with others" (1994, 47), Hampson refutes .Mrs. Travers' gesture of "cross-dressing" as an act of constructing a new identity (Hampson 2000, 180). The context of During's entertaining essay is the posturing of people like the French Enlightenment thinker Diderot who went to extremes such as having himself painted in the nude to proclaim his filiation with the primitive or the savage. Far from being what Hampson regards as a "masquerade" (2000, 180), it is my view that Mrs. Travers'

willingness to dress appropriately is a sign of her respect for the culture of the other. For a woman coming from a conservative environment as she does, the decision to accept the habiliments of another race and culture, not to mention a religion that represents the traditional other of her own, Christianity, is not to be taken lightly. My reading of Mrs. Travers's character is sanctioned by Bruce Johnson (1971, 193), who also refers to her "aesthetic expectations", but goes on to say that her willingness to surrender her husband and d'Alcacer to Belarab seems like a "wholehearted commitment to Lingard's romantic idealism" (1971, 193), and that, like Lingard, she is "intrinsically with him in opposition to all that Mr. Travers stands for" (1971, 194). Eloise Knapp Hay articulated a similar view a long time ago: "The civilized man Travers is a beast, but his wife is a darling" (1981[1963], 99).

In Lingard and Mrs. Travers, the protagonists of the romantic interlude in the novel, Conrad presents the alternative to the racist stereotyping by benighted creatures such as Travers and Shaw. Her instinctive cultural sensitivity is reflected in her attitude to the other/Other. Before she and Lingard visit the Malay chieftains, she has already experimented with Oriental dress. Her husband's response on seeing her in such dress is: "'I have often wondered at your tastes. You have always liked extreme opinions, exotic costumes, lawless characters, romantic personalities'" (*TR*, 270). Her dress becomes the occasion for him to express his long-suppressed disapproval of her personality: "'You talk like a pagan'", to which he adds, "'And you look simply heathenish in this costume'" (*TR*, 275). Not only does this self-righteous, insufferable, prig of a husband reprise Shaw's image of paganism and primitiveness, tropes common to the idiom of colonial discourse, but also touches on an important theme in the Malayan novels, namely, the cultural engagements and confrontations between East and West, the Oriental and the European. When Travers looks at her Oriental clothes with disdain, Edith, much to his chagrin, tells him that they are "'fit for a princess - I mean they are the highest quality in the land [. . .] where I am informed women

rule as much as men'" (*TR*, 274). This allusion to the equality between men and women is both an endorsement of gender equity in the world of the other/Other as well as a sardonic aside, not only on Travers' own sense of moral superiority *vis-à-vis* his wife, but also the inferior position of European women before the modern era.

IV.

This chapter, which has combined *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue*, both energized by the same creative impulse, has been predicated on the problematic question of what it means to be "one of us" as opposed to "one of them". Beth Sharon Ash (1999, 107), who undertakes a "psychosocial" reading of *Lord Jim*, postulates that in attempting to unmask Jim, Brown reduces his character and cultural values to their "basic features: the appropriative urge, the need to control, the unflagging protection of self at the expense of others". A convincing argument could be advanced that Jim embodies all three of these features in his personality. We witness his fatal but human impulse to self-protection on the *Patna* and his desire for appropriation and control during the latter phase of his life on Patusan. To the extent that his identity reflects all three facets, he remains in the words of Marlow, "one of us", and, as Michiel Heyns has stated, "alien to the inhabitants of Patusan" (1996, 87). Contrariwise, Christopher Gogwilt (1995, 95) has argued that Jim's eastward drift plots the progressive loosening of national coherence to point to a problematic collapse of identity. In the light of Gogwilt's comment, my proposal towards the end of the section on *Lord Jim* that what we see in the novel is the possibility of a post-identity that belongs to neither "one of us" nor "one of them" must be reiterated.

Interestingly, before Parry (1983), Goonetilleke (1990), Krenn (1990), Hampson (1992 and 2000) and White (1993) made their postcolonial interventions in Conrad's Malayan writing, Lloyd Fernando wrote in 1976 that "the shock of

discovery experienced by Almayer, Willems, Jim, Aïssa, Tom Lingard and others is simply the sudden awareness, the blinding recognition, that there is an alternative life-style" (1990[1976], 66). Towards the conclusion of the section on *Lord Jim* in this chapter, it was posited that in the face of the interrogatives posed by Marlow about the enigma of Jim's life, the authorial (Conrad's) voice concedes to Jim's life of the imagination, "to the claim of his own world of shades" (*LJ*, 416). While the unstimulated imagination can be "the enemy of men" (*LJ*, 11) as the omniscient narrator observes, in Jim's case his romantic imagination offers the possibility of transcendence to another plane of existence, out of the circle inscribed by nationalist or racist identity, to an indeterminate, contingent, post-identity.

Similarly, the Tom Lingard presented in *The Rescue* does not quite belong to Marlow's exclusive "Boys' Club". While his moral predicament *vis-à vis* the world of "us" and "them" is not as complicated as Jim's, his interaction with the other/Other is no less intense. To a large extent he succeeds in negotiating the spaces between the worlds he inhabits. Lingard, to a greater extent than Jim, dwells in what Homi Bhabha (1994, 4) refers to as the liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, between a position of fixed identifications, which entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. In the view of Eloise Knapp Hay (1981[1963], 104), Lingard, by "going primitive", finds a timeless culture, based on fundamental human virtues and vices that appeal to him by the simplicity of its moral standards and its preservation of primal virilities. Although Lingard does not "go native" in the sense that he cohabits with a native woman as Jim does, or Jörgenson in *The Rescue*, Hay's description of Lingard's moral universe is in accord with Bhabha's abstract formulation of liminality. Before the Travers' yacht becomes grounded in what Lingard regards as his territorial waters and precipitates his crisis of identity, he had become an integral part of his chosen world, as he reminds Travers: "'But remember you are far away from home, while I, here, I am where I belong. And I belong where I am. I am just Tom Lingard, no

more, no less'" (*TR*, 121). The omniscient narrator takes care to register that before the intrusion of the Travers into his world, Lingard "had wandered beyond that circle which race, memories, early associations, all the essential conditions of one's origin trace round every man's life" (*TR*, 121-122). Both Jim and Lingard, therefore, living on the periphery of empire, exemplify Stuart Hall's postulate of a mobile identity that is in a state of flux, under perpetual reconstruction. Living on the seam of empire and the world of the other/Other, they are amenable to other identities which contribute to the reconfiguration of their "originary and initial subjectivities" (Bhabha 1994, 1), a process from which people such as Travers, Almayer and Willems are excluded because of their strong, intractable racial and national alignments.

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: SITUATING JOSEPH CONRAD IN A POSTCOLONIAL SPACE

> Although they remain controversial and confusing terms, filled with disparate and often disparaging connotations, postmodernity, postmodernization, and postmodernism now seem to be appropriate ways of describing this contemporary cultural, political, and theoretical structuring; and of highlighting the reassertion of space that is complexly intertwined with it. (Edward W. Soja 1989, 5)

> I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities - mostly in conflict with each other - all my life, together with an acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on. (Edward W. Said 2000, 5)

> If we are "ever becoming - never being" then I would be a fool if I tried to become this thing rather than that; for I know well that I never will be anything. (*Joseph Conrad: Collected Letters, Vol 1*, Karl and Davies 1983, 268).

I.

Joseph Conrad, born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in Poland on 03 December 1857, embodies in his persona the paradox of identity reflected in the third epigraph to this chapter. Taken from a letter written to Edward Garnett on 23 March 1896, it is an index to Conrad's puzzlement, early in his writing career, at the eternal mystery of human nature and his lifelong commitment to the

enormous task of portraying the complexities of characters, especially the other/Other, whose personalities are never fixed but are in a constant flux of becoming. His early preoccupation with "otherness" is evident also in his mature writings, such as *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo*. In his Author's Note to *Nostromo* he writes:

> As to their own histories, I have tried to set them down, Aristocracy and People, men and women, Latin and Anglo-Saxon, bandit and politician, with as cool a hand as was possible in the heat and clash of my own conflicting emotions. [. . .] About Nostromo, the second of the two racially and socially contrasted men [. . .] I feel bound to say something more. [. . .] For myself I needed there a man of the People as free as possible from his class-conventions and all settled modes of thinking. (*N*, 1947 [1904], xxi)

Conrad's notion of mobile identities is in accord with the theoretical underpinnings of Stuart Hall's construct of subjectivity, mentioned in Chapter One (p. 23) of this thesis: Cultural identities, far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Such a construction of identity is epitomized by the words of Edward Said, captured in the second epigraph to this chapter. This notion of subjectivity intersects with that of the postcolonial thinker Homi Bhabha, whose postulate of the "third space" has been appropriated by this thesis to place Conrad within this dimension of theoretical manoeuvrability.

Benita Parry (1983, 5) contends that the "history of Conrad criticism is the history of changing methods and concerns in contemporary literary studies, and abstracts of the vast literature about his fiction display the presence of every stance in the critical canon". Moving away, as she insists, from the "ontological meditations and psychological explorations" (6) which characterized Conradian

scholarship in the past, Parry embarks on a sustained "political criticism" (6) of a selection of the writer's work, showing how his fiction transforms, subverts and rescues the established norms, values and myths of the imperialist civilization:

> In a situation where imperialism had been naturalised by fiction, Conrad's writings, which refused legitimacy to the imperialist vocation, entered literature as a protest against the canonical account of its intent and destination. Because he lived on the borderlines of various traditions, Conrad occupied a vantage point beyond the outlook of disaffected political writers who like him reviled the materialism of their society [. . .]. (1983, 128)

Parry's project was not the first to signal a political hermeneutic in Conrad studies, having been preceded by Eloise Knapp Hay (1981[1963]), Avrom Fleishman (1967) and Lloyd Fernando (1990 [1976]). However, Parry, in my view, inaugurates the postcolonial moment in Conrad criticism, drawing as she does on a range of seminal works by key Marxist and postcolonial theorists, from Althusser and Eagleton, to Fanon, Mannoni and Said (Parry 156-157). The kind of reading pursued by Parry was extended into the 1990s by scholars such as Bette London (1990), Ruth Nadelhaft (1986 and 1991), Bruce Henricksen (1992), Andrea White (1993) and Christopher Gogwilt (1995). The strategy of reading "contrapuntally", advocated by Edward Said (1994 [1993], 59), whereby one is simultaneously aware of competing discourses, endures in the recent works of Linda Dryden (2000) and Robert Hampson (2000) who has tapped into Homi Bhabha's postcolonial construct of hybridity and mimicry.

Conradian scholars are generally aware that the young Edward Said wrote his doctoral dissertation on Conrad at Harvard University in the early 1960s. The book based on this research, titled *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* (1966), is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a bland, conservative study

showing the relationship between the author's letters and his fiction. It is a far cry from the vigorous interrogation of Conrad's political thought by Eloise Knapp Hay (1981[1963]), or Said's mature writings such as *The World, The Text and The Critic* (1983) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). The closest Said comes to the subject of empire and conquest is in a brief concluding comment on "An Outpost of Progress": "Kayerts and Carlier had surrendered themselves to a commercial enterprise confirming the victory of the idea of imperialism and conquest" (1966, 143). The character Makola is referred to in passing, not by name but as their "trusted Negro helper [who] sells some of the station men in return for ivory" (142).

The case of Edward Said's early work on Conrad is an apt illustration of Benita Parry's implication that literary works have always been subjected to the vagaries of reading methodologies and prevailing discourses. Not even Shakespeare has been exempted from these configurations as evidenced by the profusion of post-structuralist, postcolonial and even gender and "gay" theories that are deployed in current interpretations of his works. That Conrad's writing should invite a multiplicity of perspectives is not surprising, considering that, like the Bard, he is not just of an age but for our times as well. What warrant can there be for us in the twenty-first century to consider a dead, white, Eurocentric male, whom Chinua Achebe labelled a "thoroughgoing racist" in a 1975 lecture (1988[1977], 257) and a "bloody racist" in 1977 (1990[1978], 124)? The remit for such a study comes, plausibly, from the theoretical space of postcoloniality, which is traversed by the language of post-modernism and post-structuralism as evinced in the postcolonial critical manifesto of Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994).

As a discursive term, "postcoloniality" (with or without the hyphen) remains an embattled signifier as most introductions to postcolonial readers testify. Although Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is usually acknowledged to be the foundation text in the domain of postcolonial studies, the term "postcoloniality" as a reading strategy is not indexed in Said's book nor in his subsequent works, *The World, The Text and the Critic* and *Culture and Imperialism*. The term "post-colonial", as

a less politically-loaded alternative to "Third World Studies", made its first significant impact in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) by Australian scholars Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, who write in their *Introduction:* "One of the major purposes of this book is to explain the nature of existing post-colonial theory and the way in which it interacts with, and dismantles, some of the assumptions of European theory" (12-13).

Gradually the term "postcoloniality" began to appear as a key signifier in titles of books as instantiated in the publications by Williams and Chrisman (*Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, 1993), Barker, Hulme and Iversen (*Colonial Discourse /Postcolonial Theory*, 1994), Moore-Gilbert, Stanton and Maley (*Postcolonial Criticism*, 1997), and Chrisman and Parry (*Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, 2000), amongst several others. Despite the proliferation of texts on postcoloniality, there has been no end to the debates between protagonists and antagonists on the theoretical viability of the concept. Notable amongst the detractors have been Kwame Anthony Appiah, Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad. Anne McClintock (1994, 253-266) has also offered a sustained critique of the term "postcolonial". She faults the term for prematurely celebrating a postcolonial condition that has not materialized and which fails to take cognisance of the dynamics of power in globalized politics. The "ubiquity" of the term "postcoloniality", she contends, is due to its academic "marketability". In a subsequent publication she asserts that postcoloniality is a trope of sequential linear progress which rehearses the Enlightenment trope of linearity (1995, 10). Bill Ashcroft's rejoinder to McClintock's criticism of linearity is: "This seems to be a ghost which refuses to be exorcized. Undoubtedly, the 'post' in 'post-colonialism' [Ashcroft retains the hyphen] must always contend with the spectre of linearity and the kind of teleological development it sets out to dismantle" (2001, 11). He maintains that the radical instability of the meaning of the term gives it a vibrancy, energy and plasticity which have become part of its strength, as post-

colonial analysis rises to engage issues which have been out of the purview of metropolitan theory. At a time when the question of postcoloniality as a mode of critical intervention was a vexed one in Western academia, in South Africa Leon de Kock (1993, 44-69) argued that the agglomeration of various approaches in the "post" mode runs the risk of a dehistoricized, monolith of essentialized knowledge. Despite this caveat, he concludes that inasmuch as the term can be critically disabling, it does provide the space for "other" people to tell their own stories about themselves (64).

The formulation of a "postcolonial space" in this thesis derives from Homi Bhabha who has coined the term "postmodern space" as a mode of intervention into cultural identification, in the "negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently* [author's emphasis], opening out, remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference - be it class, gender or race" (1994, 219). According to the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991[1974], 1-3), the concepts of space and time were traditionally the provenance of mathematics and science, therefore, to speak of social or mental space would have been anachronistic. The thinking of Descartes in the sixteenth century is viewed as the critical point from which the notion of space moved from a mathematical, sensory construct, to a mental and social one. With the advent of Cartesian logic, which came to include both the Subject and the Object (I think, therefore I am), space came to dominate all senses and all bodies. Hence the modern field of enquiry known as epistemology has inherited and adopted the idea that the status of space is that of a mental thing or mental place. Lefebvre has posited the problematic of space as comprised of questions about mental and social space, about their interconnections, about their links with nature on the one hand and with pure forms on the other (413). Lefebvre has distinguished between the "problematic of space", an abstract entity, and "spatial practice" which is observed and analysed on a wide range of levels such as architecture, city planning or urbanism.

Edward Soja, the social theorist, has endeavoured to spatialize critical thought in order to break out from the temporal prisonhouse of language (1989, 1). Using as his basic premise Lefebvre's theoretical paradigm, Soja foregrounds the construct of spatiality, or a geography of the mind, to open up and "recompose the territory of the historical imagination through critical spatialization" (12). Apart from the work of Lefebvre, Soja also draws upon Foucault who proclaimed that whilst the great obsession of the nineteenth century was history, the twentieth century was the epoch of space, or an epoch of simultaneity, of juxtaposition, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed (Soja 1989, 10). Soja's treatise thus calls for an appropriate interpretive balance between space, time and social being, in other words, the creation of human geographies, the making of history, and the constitution of society.

Although Homi Bhabha makes no reference to Soja whatsoever in his text *The Location of Culture*, his postulation of a third space of liminality chimes with Soja's attempt at reinserting space as a critical dimension in literary and cultural discourse. Bhabha's conceptualization of a Third Space of enunciation (1994, 37) provides an alternative to the antithetical positions of us and them, centre and periphery:

> Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. In other words, the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation [. . .] as being written in homogenous, serial time [Bhabha attributes the last three words to Benedict Anderson].

Bhabha's formulation of a third space of liminality, ambivalence and hybridity in the enunciation of identity and culture has been described by Shaobo Xie (1997, 17) as an interstitial locus of meaning, between the indigenous and the European,

the colonizer and the colonized. This newly emergent cultural space proves subversive to both the Western and the indigenous, allowing neither of them cultural and discursive continuity. In Bhabha's words, this "beyond theory" is a liminal form of signification that creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social "experience" that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities (1994, 179).

Reading Conrad from a postcolonial space of contingency enables us in the twenty-first century to conceptualize racial and cultural differences not simply in terms of binaries or even diversity, but in terms of an "*inter*national culture" (Bhabha 1994, 38), something which Conrad, as an *inter*-national writer, figured between two nationalities, was able to perceive proleptically. The author's early works, mainly those set in the Malay Archipelago, far from being the inchoate product of an apprentice writer, constitute an important dialectic in the negotiation of intercultural subjectivities.

Chinua Achebe's counter-reading of Conrad almost thirty years ago positions itself in an antithetical space from which Conrad has been challenged by a discourse which writes back to the Western episteme. Adopting Achebe's anti-colonial critical stance, several scholars, including Marianna Torgovnick (1990) and Padmini Mongia (2001), have viewed Conrad as an unmitigated racist and sexist. If Leavis et al. represent one theoretical space, which is the canonical one, and if Achebe et al. represent an antithetical space of contestation, then a more profitable endeavour would be to mediate Conrad from a third space, a liminal space of contingency. In Bhabha's view, the "post" in terms such as postmodernity, postcoloniality and postfeminism, are meaningless if they are merely signifiers of sequentiality (1994, 4). The wider significance of the postmodern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological limits of ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, dissident histories and voices - of women, the colonized, minority groups, and the bearers of policed sexualities (4-5). By shifting the paradigm of

the "post" as a signifier of linearity and periodicity to that of a "third space", a liminal space of contingency, Bhabha is dissolving the binaries of "us" and "them" and creating a space "where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides*, *in-between* where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* [author's emphases] the claims of the past and the needs of the present" (219). In this interstitial, liminal, third space, the constructs of hybridity and ambivalence play a crucial role in Bhabha's theorization of postcoloniality and the postmodern condition. Early in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha, citing the architectural practice of Renée Green, an African-American artist, likens this space to a stairwell in an art gallery which connects the lower floor to the upper floor, allowing for a fluid, temporal movement between the floors to view the exhibits as a continuum without creating a boundary between the floors: "[The] temporal movement and the passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage [. . .] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4).

It is commonplace in Conradian studies to speak of the writer's "in-between" status, of his British citizenship yet of his alienation from it, or, to refer to Mary Louise Pratt's coinage, his "hyphenated" position on the periphery of empire (1992, 213). Conrad was alienated not only in a physical sense, but also, as Ian Watt has pointed out in one of his last publications, intellectually and spiritually (2000, 5). While identifying with the Victorians' rejection of the religious, social and intellectual order of the past, he refused to accept the religion of progress with which the Victorians and Edwardians had replaced it. Conrad, as Watt asserts, also rejected Christianity: "[His] objection to Christianity combined a Voltairean rejection of myth, superstition and hypocrisy" (2000, 16). John Batchelor (1994, 279) underscores an ironic aspect of Conrad's life when he remarks that while "for most of his sixty-six years he regarded himself as a man of no religion", after his

death he has been a Catholic as he "was buried with Catholic rites and lies in a Catholic graveyard". On account of Conrad's ambivalent placement in British society, Beth Sharon Ash finds him compelling as a psychological subject as he dialectically talks back to society: "This ongoing exchange is especially apparent [. . .] because he is so uniquely positioned both inside and outside British culture [. . .] and because of his vulnerability to loss and social marginalization" (1999, 6).

Curiously, Beth Sharon Ash's study, which she proclaims is underpinned by "Gadamer's theory of meaning and historical analysis" (11), has as its main title, "Writing In Between". This is interesting because while Ash admits that Conrad's work elaborates an aesthetic of in-betweenness, she categorically rejects Derridean *differance* and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory of in-betweenness because "both these theorists overlook psychological experience, and hence seem to take for granted the self's capacity to play with boundaries" (15). More specifically, Ash finds Bhabha's version of postcolonial agency in the categories of race, class, gender and geopolitical location to be too abstract. The paradox in this claim is that Bhabha is most abstract when he does marshal psychoanalytical precepts into his reading to show that the investments of power and knowledge in the colonizer/colonized paradigm are not as clear-cut as they seem. Nobody denies that Bhabha's prose is often intractable, not even expositors such as Peter Childs and Patrick Williams (1997, 123-124) who testify: "Bhabha's texts have been called confusing, impenetrable, and unnecessarily complex. Despite this [. . .] his core concepts, such as ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity, have become touchstones for debates over colonial discourse, anti-colonial resistance, and post-colonial identity". Further on, Childs and Williams acquiesce that Bhabha's writing is "heavily indebted to other critical theorists such as Lacan and Derrida" (124). Besides these two, Bhabha draws liberally upon the works of Fanon and Freud as the essays in *The Location of Culture* amply illustrate. Hence, Beth Sharon Ash's disavowal of Bhabha is doubly ironic, not only because she maintains that his works lack a psychological dimension but

also because the part-title of her study, "Writing In Between" is distinctly evocative of Homi Bhabha's idea of "in-betweenness", a common conceit in his essays.

Bhabha's especial contribution to postcolonial discourse has been his finessed reading of Edward Said's controversial polemic in his epochal text, *Orientalism* (1978), which JanMohamed has characterized as a "Manichean struggle" (1985, 60). Robert J. C. Young, another critical exegete of Bhabha, writes in this regard: "Against Said, therefore, Bhabha argues that even for the colonizer the construction of a representation of the Other is by no means straightforward" (1990, 143). While Said in *Orientalism* posits a binary opposition between power and powerlessness, Bhabha, using Lacan's psychoanalytical precepts, complicates the problem of "otherness" which is "at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity. What such a reading reveals are the boundaries of colonial discourse and it enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness" (1994, 67). Homi Bhabha's impact on questions of national identity, ethnicity and diaspora, has been acknowledged by Nico Israel (2000, 8): "Bhabha's penetrating, often vertiginously elaborate theorizations draw upon the work of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Frantz Fanon - to explore the problematics of ethnic and national location, and to 'accentuate the positive' aspects of migration".

II.

Deploying Homi Bhabha's constructs of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity, as well as poststructuralist notions of doubling, splitting and surveillance, this thesis has attempted to place Joseph Conrad's early Malayan novels and a selection of his early short fiction, within a "Third Space [. . .] which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew " (Bhabha 1994, 37).

Unlike Jameson's "third space", which according to Bhabha is the domain of "phenomenological Marxism" (1994, 216), Bhabha's "Third Space" of representation enables "hybrid hyphenations [which] emphasize the incommensurable elements - the stubborn chunks - as the basis of cultural identifications" (1994, 219). What is at issue for Bhabha is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually opening out, redefining boundaries and blurring differences. Bhabha's precepts have been in evidence throughout this thesis which adopts the view that Conrad stood both inside and outside Victorian cultural and ethical space, developing an ambivalent mode of representation which simultaneously recuperates and subverts the orthodoxies of his time, be they racial, cultural, gender or even religious - an aspect which will be duly addressed in this concluding chapter.

In Chapter Two, which focuses on the stories "Karain", "An Outpost of Progess", "Falk", and "Amy Foster", Conrad's penchant for drawing upon a panoramic cast of characters for his vast fictional world is very much in evidence. The story of Karain, the Malay chieftain, strikes the keynote in the performativity of its protagonist's identity. The Eastern Seas from where Conrad tells us he carried away into his writing life "the greatest number of suggestions" (Author's Note to *The Shadow-Line* 1950, vii), offers the writer a fascinating locality because of its "mixture of sophistication and primitiveness [. . .] and especially [. . .] the intimacy of a small society of white men in an alien setting" (Sherry 1966, 6). On one reading, the story is congruent with Edward Said's exposition of Orientalism, a theory about the West's construction of the Orient, predicated on the polarities of us and them, the West and the East, the civilized and the savage. On another reading, Karain's character may be viewed against Homi Bhabha's construct of the fetish or stereotype, which, in Lacanian terms, represents the Other which is both feared and desired. In the person of Karain, Conrad deconstructs conceptions about the noble savage and colonial stereotypes about the

superstitious, barbaric Other. The episode of the Jubilee sixpence might sponsor the stereotype of the naive, gullible native, but the amulets and charms in Hollis's box ironically undercut such preconceptions about the rationality or the moral superiority of the Europeans. As David Adams (2001, 725) argues: "One of the story's central points, demonstrated repeatedly, is that Europeans are no less superstitious and no less criminal. Like Karain, they prove to be haunted by the voices of the dead; their power, like Karain's, is not free of remorse; and their hopes for relief take a form no less mystical". As Karain returns to his own world, which is conveyed in the elaborate conceit of a stage performance, he occupies a threshold or stage of liminality from where he begins the presencing of his next role or identity as the leader of his people.

"An Outpost of Progress", which, like its companion piece *Heart of Darkness* is set in Africa, is traditionally viewed as a sardonic yet excoriating critique of imperialistic designs in Africa. However, my angle on the story has been its preoccupation with the issue of otherness or alterity, and identity construction. Shifting the emphasis from the two representatives of empire, Carlier and Kayerts, my discussion has pivoted on the hybrid nature of Makola, who speaks English and French, is married to a woman from another ethnic group, worships evil spirits and keeps, or pretends to keep, the account books at the outpost. In keeping with his invented personality, which blurs the difference between African and European, Makola insists, not without irony, on being addressed as "Henry Price", while he refers to his wife as "Mrs. Price". Makola is the quintessential, hybrid, mimic man, who is almost the same as his masters but not quite; or to echo Bhabha's phraseology, "almost the same, but not quite" (1994, 86). Byron Caminero-Santangelo, citing Homi Bhabha in the context of the hybrid African "fireman" in *Heart of Darkness*, posits that the construction of hybridity "creates a fracturing image which mocks the colonizer and which, therefore, resists his or her control: the familiar is transformed and mastery is undone" (2001, 436). Makola, who represents the double of empire (it must be remembered that he

trades off humans for ivory), returns the gaze of empire in a gesture that constitutes a menace to the surveillance exercised over the two pathetic figures from across the oceans. In a fine adumbration of Foucault's precept of panopticism, Carlier and Kayerts end up exercising surveillance over themselves, endorsing Foucault's contention: "Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance [. . .] We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism" (1991[1977], 217).

While "Karain" and "An Outpost of Progress" offer the opportunity to explore alterities based on racial and cultural factors, "Falk" examines the "other" of ourselves when the protagonist, Captain Falk, confesses to an act of cannibalism *in extremis*. The story is an illustration not only of the Foucauldian principle that discourses produce behaviour, but also Bhabha's conviction that the stereotype is "an arrested, fixated form of representation" (1994, 75). Falk is condemned by society, represented by the self-righteous Hermann, not so much because of his confession, but because of the vexed discourse surrounding the issue of cannibalism, a practice which separates the "civilized" from the "savage" - tropes which are common to the grammar of colonial discourse. The narrator's interrogation of the circumstances surrounding the incident gradually unravels his own preconceptions and prejudices which feed into society's fixation with labels and stereotypes such as "cannibals" and "savages". John W. Griffith comments that "cannibalistic episodes, which appealed to Victorian taste for the macabre, apparently had wide currency and would have provided Conrad's contemporaries with glosses on the deterioration of 'civilized' people in contact with 'primitive' cultures" (1995, 172). Falk is ostracized by the discourse of cannibalism and my discussion has attempted to deconstruct the idiom of that disquisition so that Falk's subjectivity is recuperated and re-configured.

The last story discussed in Chapter Two is "Amy Foster", which returns to the theme of otherness based on national and ethnic identities. Its strong

autobiographical resonance foregrounds the theme of diaspora and its attendant xenophobia. Like Conrad, the castaway Yanko Goorall lives in-between different worlds, occupying a space of liminality where he has to re-stage a new identity in the face of ethnic hostility. His strange appearance, coupled with his agility and physical magnetism, mark him out not only as the other in an alien society, but also in Lacanian terms, as the Other who is also the figure of desire (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 170). Yanko, like Falk, Makola and Karain, is emblematic of Conrad's preoccupation with the nature of alterity in his fiction which interrogates what JanMohamed refers to as the "manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object" (1983, 4). Each of these characters demonstrates the ability to transcend his stereotypical figuration and stage his identity as a dynamic process or performance. The theme of identity construction in the spaces of cultural, racial and ethnic alterities broached in a selection of short fiction, which forms the subject of Chapter Two, is extended to the rest of the thesis. Focussing on the early Malayan novels, Chapters Three, Four and Five examine identities on the periphery of national, cultural and racial boundaries. In the characters of Almayer, Nina, Dain Maroola, Mrs. Almayer, Aïssa, Willems, Lord Jim, Jewel, Dain Waris, Lingard and Mrs. Travers, Conrad explores the tensions in people who find themselves on the borders of the homely and the unhomely, or, to inflect the words of Homi Bhabha from the *Introduction* to *Nation and Narration*, between "the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth [and] the *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other; the comfort of social belonging [and] the hidden injuries of class"(1990, 2).

Edward Soja (1989, 1) proposes that sequentially unfolding narratives predispose the reader to think historically, making it difficult to see the text as a map, a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together by a spatial rather than a temporal logic. Reading Conrad's Malayan novels

spatially rather than chronologically enables multiple entry points to the texts that defy strict chronology. The Malayan trilogy in particular (*Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands* and *The Rescue*), constitutes a rich intertextual matrix in which to explore the postcolonial spaces of race, gender, class and national identity.

In *Almayer's Folly*, *An Outcast of the Islands* and *Lord Jim*, the predominant leitmotifs of miscegenation and sexual transgression intensify the dialectic of race, gender, and cultural identity which are products of social construction. Through the deployment of devices such as hybridity, ambivalence and doubling (not to mention irony, a devastating weapon of subversion in Conrad), the putative superiority of men such as Almayer, Willems, Lord Jim and the Lingard of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* is brought under scrutiny. These devices, above all, serve to unmask the aetiology of racial and gender stereotyping. Susan Jones (1999, 7), drawing attention to some feminist critics who read into Conrad's presentation of woman a "blatant and uncomplicated misogyny", debunks this age old orthodoxy in Conradian criticism. She, like Ruth Nadelhaft (1986 and 1991), professes that Conrad's women, especially the racial other such as Nina, Aïssa and Jewel, are strong characters. Not only do these women exist as autonomous subjects performing their identities in a distinctly male-dominated world, but they also return the white male gaze of empire back upon itself. As Jones observes,"Aïssa's sense of Willems's alterity is presented with equal force, complicating the image of a fixed imperial subject embodied in the white European male" (1999, 10). The same may be said of Jewel in *Lord Jim*, who, like Aïssa, fears that Jim will desert her for his own people who are the others of herself. Lamenting her fate, she tells Marlow, "'[You] always leave us - for your own ends'"(*LJ*, 348). It is not surprising that at the end of *Lord Jim*, Jewel's shadowy existence in Stein's household is a stark reminder of Aïssa's fate in Almayer's house at the end of *An Outcast of the Islands*.

Linda Dryden, reminiscent of early critics of Conrad, has described Almayer's

marriage to a "native woman [as] a symptom of his degeneracy, prefiguring Willems's disastrous relationships"(2000, 64). The failure of the relationships of men such as Almayer and Willems is due to their ingrained perceptions of their racial superiority as the writer amply demonstrates. Homi Bhabha speaks of the need to "think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences"(1994, 1). Bhabha goes on to propose that these in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood and new identities. In their striving for a nationalistic, racist and originary identity, Almayer and Willems are dismal failures. The women in their lives are prepared to negotiate and articulate their new-found selfhood, thus assuming agency and authority for their lives. Their tragic ending, their etiolated, discarded lives, do not foreclose on this fact, or hint at Conrad's latent racism, as suggested by Linda Dryden (2000, 64), but counterpoint their former, vibrant personalities.

James Clifford in his study, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* claims: "[D]isplaced identities must labor [sic] to maintain their cultural identities, however artificial these may appear. Both colonial and ethnographic situations provoke the unnerving feeling of being on stage, observed and out of place. Participants in such milieux are caught in roles they cannot choose" (1988, 70). Conrad's diasporic Europeans are caught in such a paradox of identity, living at the seam of empire between different worlds. Adam Gillon (1982, 174) declares that these men and women who exist outside of normal national boundaries run the risk of having "their thin veneer of civilized conduct easily pierced by temptation". The consequence for Almayer and Willems who find themselves in such an identity crisis is the ignominy of death and oblivion in the world of the other which they fail to negotiate.

In contrast to Almayer and Willems, Jim and Lingard, the subjects of Chapter Five which focuses on *Lord Jim* and *The Rescue*, respond to the respective roles they find themselves in with an untypical repertoire of gestures. Both characters

problematize the question of what it means to be "one of us" as opposed to "one of them" in an *unheimlich* world. While the narrator of *Lord Jim* concedes to the protagonist's surrender to his life of the romantic imagination, it is an imagination that holds out the possibility of transcending the binaries of us and them and the circle that inscribes racial, national and cultural identity. Prior to his death, Jim's act of removing his hat, a symbol of his colonial otherness, gestures towards an indeterminate, interstitial, postmodern identity, or, as I have proposed in Chapter Five (p.170), a "post-identity" of contingency to suggest an ambivalence in the postmodern identity that is neither here nor there, but mobile and in transition; in other words, an identity that is the other of originary and initial subjectivities as Bhabha has postulated.

Tom Lingard of *The Rescue*, to a greater degree than Jim, also occupies the in-between, liminal space of identity which entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. In the words of the omniscient narrator, which bear iteration, Lingard had wandered beyond that circle which race, memories, early associations, all the essential conditions of one's origin trace round every man's life (*TR*, 121-122). Jim and Lingard both exemplify Bhabha's conception of an identity which is contingent on the play of history, culture and power. Paul B. Armstrong (1987, 147) captures this sense of contingency in Conrad thus: "And this paradox makes him more modern. More conservative, Conrad is less willing to accept that we inhabit a semiotic universe where sign leads only to sign without necessary origin or determinate end. More radical, he pushes to deeper metaphysical levels his explorations of the consequences of inhabiting just such a world".

Mrs. Travers of *The Rescue*, under the pervasive influence of Lingard, embodies the ideal of cultural and religious sensitivity. As the obvious foil to her bigoted and racist husband, she represents the voice of tolerance which enacts a fluid performance of identity between two cultures that have been traditionally polarized along religious as well as racial lines. What Hampson refers to as Mrs.

Travers' "cross-dressing" is not a "masquerade" as he suggests (2000, 180). Contrary to "depriv[ing] Otherness of its subjectivity and substantiality" (2000, 180) as Hampson puts it, she dramatizes the possibility, however remote, of a rapprochement between the Islamic and Christian ways of viewing the world from a space of hybridity and in-betweenness. Although she concedes that she does not possess Immada's smaller physical frame which is more suited to Malayan dress, she is willing to wear it in deference to the Malay chieftains when she accompanies Lingard to their camp. In this respect, I am inclined to concur with what Anne Tagge (1997, 103) has said about Mrs. Travers: "Edith is playing a role, but it is a role she likes, one perhaps more suited to her true nature than that of the proper English wife". Changing one's habiliments to accommodate the religious and cultural sensitivities of the other/Other must rank as a powerful semiotic gesture denoting forbearance, which is patently lacking in her husband who regards her role play as some kind of frivolous masquerade.

The extent to which an item of cultural dress can ignite deep-seated passion and prejudice is clearly evident in the violent response of Willems in *An Outcast of the Islands* when he tears off Aïssa's veil and tramples "upon it as though it had been a mortal enemy" (*OI*, 139). Willems's reaction is not an isolated, capricious act, but issues from the fraught relationship that characterizes the colonizer/colonized, or the us/them impasse in which colonized subjects have to contend with attempts to erase their own culture, history and cosmology. Willems's aversion to Aïssa's veil which marks her as culturally and religiously different, is the outcome of the conditioning by an imperialist discourse that constructs the other on its own exclusionary terms. Gayatri C. Spivak makes a similar charge in her long essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?": "[Everything] they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe" (1988, 280). The proximity of the racial, cultural, and religious other is ubiquitous in the Malayan novels in which Islam constitutes an important sub-text. In 1981, John

Lester, claiming that Islam is such a prominent feature of Conrad's early fiction, expressed surprise that it had hitherto received such little critical attention. Lester remarks that Conrad's Muslims are usually represented as "bigoted, frequently violent, invariably unscrupulous and always complacently exclusive" (1981, 163). He points out that at the time when Conrad wrote his early Malayan works several books on Islam had appeared in England, whose "tones ranged from Christian condemnation to thoughtful appraisal" (1981, 165). If Conrad's Muslims are presented as incorrigible villains and cut-throats, then they only serve to mirror these very qualities that some of the European protagonists themselves possess. If Muslims such as Babalatchi, Lakamba and Omar in the early Conrad are guilty of religious chauvinism and bigotry, then this is countervailed by the innate sense of racial exclusivity and superiority of men such as Almayer and Willems of *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* respectively, and Shaw and Travers of *The Rescue*.

The crossroads of religious difference present a dialectical space of interrogation of stereotypical attitudes towards the other. Numerous are the occasions in Conrad when we witness the disparity between precept and practice amongst Muslims and Christians alike. In *The Rescue*, for example, people like Belarab "[chant] prayers five times every day, but they [have] not the faith" (*TR*, 113). While Belarab acknowledges there is a "Paradise as great as all earth and all Heaven together" (*TR*, 113), he banishes infidel whites such as Lingard from this paradise. Another episode depicting such bigotry and intolerance is contained in a letter written by Jörgenson to Lingard in which another religious fundamentalist, Ningrat, is described. Ningrat, who is addicted to opium, a practice abhorrent to Islamic precept, reads his prayers in the mosque on a Friday, after which he "'prophe[sies] misfortune, ruin, and extermination if these whites [are] allowed to get away'" (*TR*, 172). Yet another exemplification of religious hypocrisy in *The Rescue* is in the person of Daman. He is portrayed as a pious individual with the *Koran* hanging "on his breast" but a deadly kris "stuck

into the twist of his sarong" (*TR*, 222). His religious convictions do not preclude his desire to cut his enemy's throat at the slightest provocation, or to plunder Lingard's vessel, the *Emma*. The hypocrisy of Muslims like Belarab and Ningrat is paralleled by the racist bigotry of Christians such as Mrs. Vinck in *Almayer's Folly*, from whose "Christian teaching" Nina, according to the narrator's ironic interpolation, had "a good glimpse of civilized life" (*AF,* 42); or, in the lack of Christian charity in the community that hounds Yanko Goorall in "Amy Foster". Owen Knowles and Gene Moore (2000, 204) confirm the role of Islam in the dialectic of selves and others in Conrad's works set in the Malay Archipelago:

> Islam is thus an important element in Conrad's depiction of colonial "Others" who, through their actions and prejudices, make visible the hypocrisy of European colonists and traders. While Conrad's use of Islam points up Christian failings, there is no intention of perpetuating a religious (or racial) hierarchy, nor of privileging one faith above another.

In contrast to that segment of humanity which represents the extremes in the racial and religious spectrum, stands the figure of Lingard of *The Rescue* whose religious and cultural sensitivity to the other embraces the Conradian ethic of what it means to be in the existential space of other beliefs and cultures. When one of Lingard's men is killed in a skirmish with the Papuans, his body "is wrapped up decently in a white sheet, according to Mohammedan usage" (*TR*, 74), and interred at sea. Lingard's action receives narratorial endorsement: "In such acts performed simply, from conviction, what may be called the romantic side of the man's nature came out; that responsive sensitiveness to the shadowy appeals made by life and death, which is the groundwork of a chivalrous character" (*TR*, 74). Lingard's sense of propriety throws into crude relief the shameful episode in *An Outcast of the Islands* when Willems torches the hut in which Aïssa's father, the once feared Omar, has been buried. Babalatchi, who reports the incident to

Lingard, says: "'Yes, Tuan! [The] white man destroyed it himself [. . .] Yes; swearing to me by the name of your God and ours that he would burn me and [Aïssa] in there [. . .]'" (*OI*, 230). Lingard's response to this outrage is unequivocal: "'Oh, damn it! [. . .] That man is not like other white men. You know he is not. He is not a man at all'" (*OI*, 230). Apart from desecrating a grave, Willems commits a cardinal act of unspeakable insensitivity to the religious practices of the other: Muslims do not, as a rule, cremate their dead. It is this sacrilege which provokes the expletive "damn" from Lingard and his subsequent disavowal of Willems's humanity.

That humans share a common bond of fellowship, however scattered they may be over geographical space and time, has been acknowledged by Conrad in his Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly (*quoted in some length in Chapter Three (pp. 71-72). Sanford Pinsker (1978, 10) has cautioned that "serious Conradians" generally regard the prefaces to the Collected Editions as critically unreliable, the two exceptions being the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* which constitutes Conrad's poetic credo, and *A Personal Record.* However, there is another exception to these two. With regard to the Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly*, Ian Watt assures us that this preface was written in rebuttal to a charge by Alice Meynell, a prominent literary figure of the time, that the Malayan works were "de-civilized" (2000, 37). That the preface was only published in 1921, a fact Watt finds "something of a mystery" (2000, 38), does not diminish the import of the message for Conrad's readers in the early twentieth century, as well as for us in the early twenty-first century. The final sentence of the Author's Note consolidates his position in relation to the other: "Their hearts - like ours - must endure the load of the gifts from Heaven: the curse of facts and the blessing of illusions, the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly" (Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly* 1947, viii). In virtues as in vices there are no boundaries that set up hierarchies amongst humanity.

III.

In an attempt to answer the question "Who I am", Charles Taylor, in his seminal treatise *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989, 35), offers the modern man and woman a template for designing his or her identity at the end of a troubled century:

> I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out.

An important aspect of Taylor's paradigm is its moral and spiritual dimension. As Taylor concludes his monumental study, he offers the assurance of a "Judaeo-Christian theism" (1989, 521) as the promise of a divine affirmation of the human. Joseph Conrad, as this study endorses, also appeals to a humanistic template for the formation of identity but not from the fixed social and moral compass of Taylor, nor the latter's comforting theological space of Judaeo-Christianity. Having renounced the Catholic faith he was born into, Conrad was able to incorporate impartially into his fictional world the vast expanse of humanity with its idiosyncrasies and peccadilloes, and its clashing worldviews, on a scale reminiscent of Shakespeare. What his early fiction signals is the possibility of transcending boundaries of race, class and gender, as well as the orthodoxies of textual signification so that we change not only "the *narratives* (Bhabha's emphasis) of our histories, but transform our sense of what it means to live, to be, in other times and different spaces, both human and historical" (Bhabha 1994, 256). Locating Conrad and his early work in this hybrid "Third Space" of interrogation imparts to his work not just a modernist identity as enunciated by

Charles Taylor, but an identity that gestures beyond Conrad's era, towards the postcolonial one of our new millennium. Edward Said, whose ambivalent national status reflects Conrad's "habits of representation" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999, 14), captures the postcolonial moment of identity construction in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994[1993], 407-408):

> No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were, mainly, exclusively, white, or black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities.

Goonetilleke (1990, 4), who demurred at F. R. Leavis's attempt to place Conrad in the tradition of Henry James, George Eliot and Jane Austen, advances the thesis that Conrad, who was never a part of the British establishment, transcends the "Englishness" that was a benchmark of Leavis and the post-1930s literary-critical methods. In our new millennium Conrad continues to occupy a critical space in postcolonial studies, albeit a controversial one. As Brenda Cooper has noted, Rushdie, Ahmad, Spivak, Achebe, Said and others, whatever their differences, examine the world with "postcolonial eyes within the continuing Western Empire [. . .] in which Joseph Conrad occupies prime position as still reigning Emperor" (1996, 17-18). If this seems to be a jarring contradiction in terms, it is an index to Conrad's embattled, ambivalent status and his location at the intersections of colonial, modernist and postcolonial discourses. Jacques Darras, writing in the context of "Youth" which affords Marlow his first glimpse of the exotic East, states that the ironic silence of the author points out the false

nature of the seemingly triumphant rhetoric of Marlow (1982, 20). Behind this rhetoric, Darras postulates, "Conrad sets out to cast doubts upon a certain official version of history and to destroy the romantic myth of the enigmatic East" (1982, 21). Conrad, whom Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a "hyphenated white man" (1992, 213) owing to his transcultural/transnational spatiality, lives in a liminal space, both in and beyond empire. From this exilic position he is able to gain a purchase on the prejudices embedded in the colonial discourses of his time, while simultaneously dismantling the comforting myths that sustained these discourses.

When South African academics Gail Fincham and Myrtle Hooper wrote to several prominent universities in Africa inviting contributions for their publication on a "postcolonial" Conrad, the negative response they received from African scholars prompted them to conclude that Conrad's texts are "often seen as monuments to white privilege, his ironic vision a threat to popular revolutionary fervour, his scepticism a confusion and an instrument of ideological control" (1996, xiii). This thesis adopts the position that Conrad's early fiction speaks to us as powerfully now as it did when his detractors thought his subject matter was "de-civilized" as we read in his Author's Note to *Almayer's Folly*; that he invests the other/Other with an authentic voice that not only commands agency and talks back to the metropolis but challenges it as well; that notions of race, class, and gender hierarchies are social constructions which are under constant scrutiny and subversion; that essentialisms about what constitutes the other/Other - be they barbarians, cannibals or heathens - are produced by prevailing discourses and are not necessarily representations of reality. Above all, this thesis has maintained that Conrad's early works, which several scholars have either glossed over, misrepresented or dismissed as stereotypical, possess certain lineaments which are of relevance proleptically in the exploration of identity in a postcolonial, liminal space of the here-and-now, in an in-between Third Space which enables us, in the words of Homi Bhabha, to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (1994, 39). In this space, Conrad's work offers no definitive

answers, no grand narratives of universal truth, but persistently poses the conundrum of what it means to be different from the other/Other, without settling into the convenience of the stereotype.

Homi Bhabha, writing an *Afterword* to a recent study on John Milton, titled *Milton and the Imperial Vision* edited by Rajan and Sauer, says of Milton: "[He] earns the authority to speak in our time, to become part of the postcolonial conversation, because of the deep ambivalence that exists in his imperial voice" (1999, 317). Transposing these attributes to Joseph Conrad, one might argue that he too earns the authority to participate in the postcolonial discourse, to address us in the postcolonial/postmodern space of contingency, working and re-working the sites of ambivalence and alterity which impart to his early writings their revisionary power and pertinence to our age. In fine, Joseph Conrad, who died on 03 August 1924, not long after he had declined several honorary doctorates as well as the knighthood (Batchelor 1994, 277), finds a niche in postcolonial discursive space.

* * *

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